

Luther Seminary

Digital Commons @ Luther Seminary

Master of Theology Theses

Student Theses

5-20-2018

Living the American Dream: Faith Formation and the Missio Dei Dilemma among Seventh Day Adventist African American Immigrant Families

Enock Ariga Marindi
Luther Seminary

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.luthersem.edu/mth_theses



Part of the [Religion Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Marindi, Enock Ariga, "Living the American Dream: Faith Formation and the Missio Dei Dilemma among Seventh Day Adventist African American Immigrant Families" (2018). *Master of Theology Theses*. 22.
https://digitalcommons.luthersem.edu/mth_theses/22

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Student Theses at Digital Commons @ Luther Seminary. It has been accepted for inclusion in Master of Theology Theses by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ Luther Seminary. For more information, please contact tracy.iwaskow@gmail.com, mteske@luthersem.edu.

LIVING THE AMERICAN DREAM: FAITH FORMATION AND THE MISSIO DEI
DILEMMA AMONG SEVENTH DAY ADVENTIST AFRICAN AMERICAN
IMMIGRANT FAMILIES

By

ENOCK ARIGA MARINDI

A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of

Luther Seminary

In Partial Fulfillment of

The Requirements for the Degree of

MASTER OF THEOLOGY

THESIS ADVISER: DR. MARY HESS

ST. PAUL, MINNESOTA

2018

ABSTRACT

Living the American Dream: Faith Formation and the Missio Dei Dilemma
among Seventh Day Adventist African American Immigrant Families

By

Enock Ariga Marindi

Faith formation of children in a post-Christian America and balancing chasing American dream and obeying the Missio Dei poses insurmountable challenges to African immigrant families. This study analyzes works of scholars Karen-Marie Yust, Marva J. Dawn and Marjorie J. Thompson on faith formation and the family, and Andrew Kirk, Athyal and Nyce, Christopher J. Wright regarding Missio Dei. Bible texts on mission and faith formation are discussed.

Through an exploratory study of focus group discussions and observation and document analysis, this study argues that the family, church and community need to unite and work together as interrelated systems to advance the mission of God. While parents still want to form the faith of their children amidst living in a post Christian environment, a myriad of challenges still hamper their efforts in faith formation of their children. Parents therefore need to become intentional in developing the faith of their children in the home, church, community and schools.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Glory, honor and worship be to God for the gift of life, and the ability given to me to seek knowledge and wisdom.

First and foremost my appreciation goes to my wife, Masika Grace, and my sons, Benjamin, Bethuel and Benaiah, who have endured the separation and love of a husband and a father for two years while I travelled to the USA to study, do research, and sit for long hours writing.

I am highly indebted to my advisor, Prof. Mary Hess, who helped me to clarify my thoughts and whose unmatched patience, knowledge and insight translated what could have remained just as an idea in my mind into a work of such magnitude. Sincere thanks also goes to my readers, Drs. Kathryn Schifferdecker and Adam Copeland, whose insights were welcomed and added to the work.

I thank the Graduate Theological Education for their support and encouragement. I also want to thank the Office of International Student and Scholar Affairs for their financial assistance.

Lastly, I want to thank the members of Faith International SDA church who accepted being part of my focus group and for their brilliant ideas that shaped this work. May God richly bless your faith formation endeavors.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	ii
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	iii
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	vii
Chapter 1	1
INTRODUCTION	1
Problem Statement and Research Question	3
Purpose of the Study	7
Chapter Outlines	8
Chapter 2	10
THE AMERICAN DREAM	10
American Dream and Quality Education	12
American Dream and Quality Medical Care	13
American Dream and Social Cultural Connectedness	14
American Dream and Socio-Economic and Political Development	15
American Dream and the Place of God	16
Chapter 3	21
THE MISSIO DEI	21
Biblical Foundations of Missio Dei	21
God With a Mission: Revelation of God’s Mission to Humanity	25
The Mission of God in the New Testament	34
Paul and the Mission of God	37
Chapter 4	45
THE FAMILY AS A FORMING CENTER FOR FAITH IN MISSION	45
Faith Formation	45
The Family, Faith Formation and Mission of God	48
Challenges Facing the Immigrant Families as Faith Formation Centers	57

Engaging the Family in Faith Formation as a Component in the Mission of God	58
Family Rituals	59
Use of Religious Stories during Family Worship.....	60
Nature Walk	63
Vacation Bible School	64
Parents as Role Models	65
Church Home Partnership	66
CHAPTER 5.....	69
METHODOLOGY	69
Research Design	69
Locale of the Study	70
Procedures for Data Collection	71
Sample, Sampling and Sampling Procedure	74
Methods of Data Collection	76
Data Analysis	78
Ethical Considerations	80
CHAPTER 6:	83
MAKING SENSE OF LIVING THE AMERICAN DREAM: FAITH FORMATION AND THE MISSIO DEI DILEMMA AMONG SEVENTH DAY ADVENTIST AFRICAN AMERICAN IMMIGRANT FAMILIES	83
The American Dream.....	86
Faith Formation	95
The Mission of God	106
The Role of Adventist Schools in the Mission of God	109
Parents as Role Models in the Mission of God	110
CHAPTER 7.....	113
SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS	113
Summary	113
Conclusion.....	114
Recommendations	115
APPENDIX A: <u>I</u> NFORMED CONSENT FORM	116
APPENDIX B: <u>F</u> OCUSED DISCUSSION GUIDE	118

APPENDIX C : IN VIVO CODES	119
BIBLIOGRAPHY	122

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

FGD	Focused Group Discussion
IRB	Institutional Review Board
SDA	Seventh Day Adventist Church

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Living the American dream¹ has driven many African migrant families to juggle between two or more jobs. Husbands and wives are spending less and less time with their children. Some parents are taking their children to special homes where an individual has provided a day and night child care center. At such home care, parents are not able to monitor what kind of spiritual nurturing/formation that their children receive from the time they are admitted to the care center until they are released to them.

Bonding between a child and a parent as well as spiritual formation sessions seem to be deteriorating due to less time spent by parents with their children in homes.² Spiritual formation, as part of the mission of God³ in African immigrant families, seems to be becoming an impossibility as parents rarely meet together at a round table and in a relaxed mood to mold the spirituality of their children. One of the important commands

¹ “American dream” here refers to the idea that life will get better and progress will be attained if one embraces the idea of working hard. This in turn will guarantee upward social mobility and a better and fuller life for the children and family. The phrase “American dream” to an immigrant refers to an opportunity to live in a free world where civil liberties are enjoyed by everyone, where one has an opportunity to pursue happiness through diligence and hard work, which will ultimately guarantee a good future. It is this meaning that I have in mind whenever I use the phrase, “American Dream.” Refer to https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/American_Dream.

² Yvonne Bohr and Connie Tse, “Satellite Babies in Transnational Families: A Study of Parents’ Decision to Separate from Their Infants,” *Infant Mental Health Journal* 30, no. 3 (2009): 265-86.

³ Mathew 28:20.

found in the Bible as well as Judaism is what is recorded in the book of Deuteronomy urging parents to be instruments of the *missio Dei*.⁴

Hear, O Israel: The LORD is our God, the LORD alone. You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might. Keep these words that I am commanding you today in your heart. Recite them to your children and talk about them when you are at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you rise. Bind them as a sign on your hand, fix them as an emblem on your forehead, and write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.⁵

This Deuteronomic teaching, I believe, presents the family as a place that God intends to be the center of faith formation.⁶ Trying to live the American dream seems to have robbed African immigrant families of their role of being places of faith formation that God intended them to be.

I totally agree with Thompson in her passionate appeal to parents when she argues that, “for better or for worse, whether intentionally or haphazardly, it is within families that, as children, our hearts and minds are fundamentally formed.”⁷ Throughout this thesis, I argue that when parents embrace the mission of God, they will devote more time to their children’s spiritual formation than chasing the elusive American dream. After all,

⁴ The term *missio Dei* will be used in this study to refer to God’s long-term purpose of reclaiming and restoring all nations and the whole creation unto Himself.

⁵ “Bible Gateway Passage: Deuteronomy 6 New Revised Standard Version,” Bible Gateway, accessed October 31, 2017, <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Deuteronomy 6&version=NRSV>.

⁶ Faith formation in this study refers to a deliberate attempt to ground children in faith and a faith tradition with the aim of nurturing life shaping faithfulness to God in children. It is the process of conforming to the image of Christ through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

⁷ Marjorie J. Thompson, *Family: The Forming Center* (Nashville: Upper Room Books, 1996), 19.

what can it profit a family if they gain all the world and lose their children to drugs, to diseases, and finally, a wasted life after working very hard to provide for them?

I further argue in this thesis that when there are adequate spiritual formation practices in the family, the church and the community, members, especially the children, will be involved in the progression of the mission of God. Coming short of this may eventually lead to the loss of spiritual formation among children in African Immigrant families.

Problem Statement and Research Question

The past three centuries have seen people migrate from one part of the world to another. Such movements may be a result of parents doing business in other parts of the world or parents looking for “greener pastures,” or due to parents being international career diplomats or business people. These movements have seen parents give birth to children whose childhoods and perhaps adulthoods are spent in cultures and countries other than their own. Such is the case of African immigrant families.

Such movements afford these families unique challenges and opportunities socially, financially, and spiritually. In the realm of social life, the children are raised in an environment that neither embraces fully the culture of their parents, nor embraces fully the culture in which they are raised due to the amalgamation of cultures that surround them and/or due to movements back and forth from one locality to another. On the positive side, these children have an opportunity to learn other people’s cultures and adopt ways to live together with each other harmoniously. In the financial sphere, the parents find themselves in a rat race in order to meet the bills and live a good life.

In the realm of spirituality, children of immigrant families face diversity of religious beliefs and traditions: from Mormons to Muslims, from Anglicans to Baptists, from Pentecostals to Lutherans, and from Catholics to Seventh Day Adventists. These varied religious encounters leave them confused on which traditions to embrace—especially in the absence of proper guidance from parents and family members. Children in such families become “casualties” in the rat race of their parents, hence finding that they belong neither here nor there.

When less time is dedicated by parents, the church and the community to nurture children holistically, that is physically, mentally, spiritually and socially, children more often end up failing to recognize the importance of God in their lives and other cultural particularities for shaping Christian discipleship. The children are left in the dark scrambling for the comfort, belonging and nurture that the presence of their parents would have offered. Yet it is a fact of life that none “wants to be wondering through trials without a sense of belonging and purpose.”⁸

In an attempt to create extra time to pursue their dreams, more often parents substitute their communion with their children in the home with lavish expenditure of toys and other play materials for the children. Parents expect these children to develop faith in God yet they forget that young people’s faith is shaped by faith which comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God (Romans 10:17, NIV) and by the model of the faith of older adults. In fact, Paul rhetorically asks, “How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in him of whom they have not

⁸ Karen-Marie Yust, *Real Kids, Real Faith: Practices for Nurturing Children’s Spiritual Lives* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2004), xx.

heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher?" (Romans 10:14). Karen Marie Yust puts it well when she says,

Our children experience heartache, frustration and confusion as well. Both we and they need something more in our lives than the stuff that the companies want to sell to us. We want to find a more nurturing and dependable source of purpose and meaning. And we want to establish a connection with this source that will endure throughout our lives and the lives of our children.⁹

What we are witnessing today among our younger generation is therefore, "a culture that displays individuals' efforts to achieve some fulfillment for or to repress the deep yearning within them."¹⁰ The seductive spirit of chasing for material rather than the spiritual robs us and our families of what Marjorie J. Thompson calls "foundational experiences with God."¹¹ In such a state, children remain vulnerable to falsehoods, postmodern ideologies and beliefs which increase their doubt in the word of God and their hearts and thus ultimately shake their faith.

In that state, Thompson concludes, "the tragedies and irrational evils of life assault our convictions; the secular attitudes of our culture seduce and undermine us; our tendency to become self-absorbed, distracted and forgetful leads us away from deeper spiritual intuitions."¹² The wise man Solomon termed this kind of lifestyle to be like

⁹ Ibid., xx.

¹⁰ Marva J. Dawn, *Is It a Lost Cause?: Having the Heart of God for the Church's Children* (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Pub., 1997), xx.

¹¹ Thompson, *Family*, 16.

¹² Ibid., 16.

chasing the wind” (Ecclesiastes 1:14).¹³ The end result is what Dawn calls, “the shift from the supernatural to natural.”¹⁴

Throughout this thesis, I argue that what our children need is a community of members, who not only will be role models in faith, but also willing to spend quality time with children and who intentionally and purposely will keep the spiritual formation of children at the center of their interactions by assuring them that faith in God is important and they (children) need to participate in the mission of God.

Whereas different scholars such as Caldwell,¹⁵ Yust,¹⁶ Thompson,¹⁷ Stonehouse,¹⁸ and Langford¹⁹ have addressed the importance of the family in spiritual formation, none of them discusses the challenges of spiritual formation and the mission of God among African immigrant families within their unique quest for the American dream. Whereas there is an outcry from parents on the need to address the holistic development of their children,²⁰ there is no study currently in the Seventh Day Adventist church that addresses

¹³ *Holy Bible: New International Version* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2009), 536.

¹⁴ Dawn, *Is It a Lost Cause?*, 24.

¹⁵ Elizabeth Caldwell, *Making a Home for Faith: Nurturing the Spiritual Life of Your Children* (Cleveland, OH: Pilgrim Press, 2007).

¹⁶ Yust, *Real Kids, Real Faith*.

¹⁷ Thompson, *Family, the Forming Center*.

¹⁸ Catherine Stonehouse, *Joining Children on the Spiritual Journey: Nurturing a Life of Faith* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1998).

¹⁹ Daniel L. Langford, *The Pastor's Family: The Challenges of Family Life and Pastoral Responsibilities* (New York: Haworth Pastoral Press, 1998).

²⁰ Robert Beatty, “Nobody Is Answering the Cry for Help from the African-American Man-Child,” *South Florida Times*, June 23, 2011, <http://www.sfltimes.com/uncategorized/nobody-is-answering-the-cry-for-help-from-the-african-american-man-child>.

the effect of chasing the American dream on faith formation in the family and its implications for the mission of God. Hence, this study attempted to answer the following question: Can African immigrant families involve themselves in the faith formation of their children as participation in the mission of God at the same time as they pursue their American dream?

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study therefore was to find out whether African immigrant families can nurture faith formation as part of fulfilling the *missio Dei* in a way that directly engages in challenges of chasing the American dream (sending their kids to school, working hard to ensure a better future for their children).

This thesis engaged in discussion of how African immigrants are engaging in the spiritual formation of their children. To do so, I explored faith formation practices of parents and how serious they take the mission of God and what it means to be a co-laborer with Christ in furthering the mission of God among their children in America. This study endeavored to put forward a strong case for family members to defy temptations of an elusive American dream at the expense of faith formation and the mission of God. Finally, this study aimed at encouraging the parents and the pastors of the importance of faith formation in fulfilling the mission of God.

Chapter Outlines

In chapter one, the researcher addresses the statement of the problem, the research question, and the purpose of the study. The chapter also includes an outline describing the content of each chapter of the thesis.

Chapter 2 discusses the concept of the American dream as it is understood by African immigrants before coming to America and how they understand it now that they are in America. The chapter also discusses the realities that the immigrant families have to contend with now that they are in America and the prospects that they have in mind in living to their American Dream. Finally, the chapter discusses the vision of this community about who God is and their relationship with God

Chapter 3 entails a discussion on the biblical foundations of the *missio Dei*. Here the concept of God being God of mission ever creating humanity and the revelation of His mission to humanity is discussed. Additionally, how He chose Abraham, promising to make him great person and a father of many nations; through whom the world would know God's Mission is explored. This chapter also traces the mission of God both in the Old Testament and New Testament

In chapter 4, the family as a forming center where faith is formed, nurtured and transmitted for mission is discussed. The work of how various scholars see the family institution and the role the family plays in nurturing the faith of her members, especially children is discussed. Additionally, challenges facing the immigrant families as faith formation centers are addressing

In chapter 5, the methodology used in this study to collect and analyze the data is discussed. This study utilized a simple exploratory method. Tools of data collection such

as focused group discussion, and the procedures of data collection, analysis and presentation are discussed.

In chapter 6, the researcher presents primary data results. Drawing from the focused group discussions transcript, and literature reviewed, the data obtained from the field is discussed under the major themes of faith formation, mission of God and the American dream. The major process here follows the identification of themes that are gleaned from the focused group discussion.

Finally in Chapter 7, the researcher reports a summary of results, conclusions drawn, and recommendations.

CHAPTER 2

THE AMERICAN DREAM

The term “American dream” has taken different shades of meaning since the term was invented by historian James Truslow Adams in 1931. In his view, the American dream entailed “a dream of a land in which life should be better and richer and fuller for every man, with opportunity for each according to his ability or achievement.”¹ In other words, America as a nation provided equal opportunities that any person from any quarter of the world who had stepped into this country, possessing literally nothing except a valid dream, would rise to success economically, socially and otherwise to the pinnacle of society through his/her hard work and determination. Such upward economic, social and political mobility would then guarantee the individual enjoyment of freedoms of liberty and equality beyond their parents. It is this dream that many African immigrants looked forward to when they stepped into the borders of America.

To the African immigrant, the American dream meant access to quality education, gathering financial resources to support relatives who remained back in Africa, equal opportunity in terms of job placement in public sector based on their academic achievements and experience, having free time to enjoy the recreational facilities often portrayed in Hollywood movies, access to free or affordable medical care, being able to

¹ “Youngro Lee, To Dream Or Not To Dream, 16 Cornell Journal of Law and Public Policy 231, 232, September 3, 2017,

raise and educate their kids in good schools of their choice, driving along the road without fear of being targeted and racially profiled by the police, and so on.

These hopes of living the American dream have turned out to be a fantasy and a nightmare to many African immigrants specifically those who attend the Faith International Seventh Day Adventist Church. The ever-increasing cost of college tuition is far beyond the realization of an average African American immigrant family.

It is both a fantasy and a nightmare to many because it exposes the family which is the basic unit of society to challenging dynamics such as divorce or lack of time to sit together as a husband and wife, as most fathers and mothers have agreed to work in shifts so that at one moment when one is coming in from work, the other is at the doorway rushing to work or even not meeting with each other at all, save the weekend. Subsequently, the family which is meant to be a place where husband and wife and children sit together, plan together, share the word of God together, nurture and form faith together, has been left to whomever it concerns.

In this thesis, therefore, I look at the American dream as an embodiment of opportunity, success, equality, freedom; perseverance and hard work to improve ones' lot, justice and safety for all. This is the American dream to the African immigrant. The dream rests not upon the state, but upon each individual. It is hinged on the pursuit of happiness and good future life for the individual who shapes it in the present. It is a promise of hope for a better future, an assurance that offers an opportunity to acquire happiness, protection and access to the abundance of wealth on this earth.

I cannot discuss the American dream without describing the context of the congregation of my study. SDA Faith International church is found at 7708 62nd Ave N,

Minneapolis, MN 55428. Although the church is located in the city of Brooklyn Park, the majority of the church members come from Brooklyn Center while others come as far as Saint Paul, Maple Grove, Plymouth, St. Cloud, Duluth and Minneapolis to attend service on a Saturday and other designated days of worship. According to statisticalatlas.com, 37.7% of the residents of Brooklyn Center are of African origin.² Out of this population, 75% of the black African families living there have children in their households.³ It is interesting to note that 31.81% of the couples in Brooklyn Center both are working and have children who are under 18 years old in their households.⁴ These are some of the people who left their countries of origin in pursuit of the American dream.

American Dream and Quality Education

In terms of getting a quality education, the American dream is still far from being attainable for an African immigrant.⁵ The ever-increasing cost of college tuition is far beyond the realization of an average African American immigrant family. Besides that, in most African countries, education is exam-oriented. The impact of the exam-oriented curriculum is that if a learner is not able to attain a required pass mark to enable him/her

² “Overview of Minnesota (State) - Statistical Atlas,” accessed September 7, 2017, <https://statisticalatlas.com/state/Minnesota/Overview>.

³ “Household Types in Brooklyn Center, Minnesota (City) - Statistical Atlas,” accessed September 7, 2017, <https://statisticalatlas.com/place/Minnesota/Brooklyn-Center/Household-Types#figure/families-with-children>.

⁴ “Employment Status in Brooklyn Center, Minnesota (City) - Statistical Atlas,” accessed September 8, 2017, <https://statisticalatlas.com/place/Minnesota/Brooklyn-Center/Employment-Status>.

⁵ <http://www.asbj.com/MainMenuCategory/Archive/2012/April/0412pdfs/The-Costs-of-Immigration.pdf>.

proceed to the next academic level, it means that the number of years spent by that learner in school is wasted.

Unlike here in America, where to a large extent the curriculum is skills-based, the African immigrant is more often faced with a challenge in transitioning from exam-oriented curriculum to the skills based system of education. In most cases, he/she has to contend with the glaring fact that some of the acquired educational accomplishments from Africa are deemed “inferior” and or irrelevant to the education system in America. This not only impacts the African immigrant search for a job commensurate to his or her educational accomplishment, but also dictates that the African immigrant has to settle for a low-paying job as he/she enrolls in an evening class or weekend class to attain the prerequisite American qualification which will enable him/ her to compete in the job market or in the field of academia.

American Dream and Quality Medical Care

The African immigrant is faced with another dilemma in terms of medical care. In a study entitled “Immigrants And Health Care: Sources Of Vulnerability,” Kathryn Pitkin Derose, José J. Escarce and Nicole Lurie found out that “overall, immigrants have lower rates of health insurance, use less health care, and receive lower quality of care than U.S.-born populations.”⁶ Derose et al. cite factors such as “limited English proficiency; federal, state, and local policies on access to publicly funded health care; residential location; stigma and marginalization.”⁷ This finding is contrary to the American dream

⁶ Kathryn Pitkin Derose, José J. Escarce, and Nicole Lurie, “Health Care: Sources of Vulnerability,” *Health Affairs* 26, no. 5 (September 1, 2007): 1258-68, doi:10.1377/hlthaff.26.5.1258.

⁷ Derose, Escarce, and Lurie.

that African immigrants had before stepping on the American soil. In most African countries where immigrants in Minnesota come from, for example in Kenya, medical insurance is not mandatory. Once one falls sick, he or she has just to walk to the hospital or clinic and get treatment and pay the bill out of his/her pocket, unlike here where you have to have medical insurance.

So for an African immigrant pursuing the American dream, he or she must work two or more jobs, which are not only underpaying him/her but also require long hours on the job, essentially negating the American dream that most immigrants had before coming to America.

American Dream and Social Cultural Connectedness

The African immigrants envision their stay in America as an opportunity to procure a good future for their children and family members in Africa. In a study entitled “Transnationalism among African immigrants in North America: The case of Ghanaians in Canada,” Thomas Y. Owusu of William Paterson University found that Ghanaians who immigrate to North America do not sever ties with their family members in Africa. Instead, they invest in owning houses back home in Africa and other investments with the prospect of returning to Africa to settle permanently.⁸

Festus E. Obiakor and Michael O. Afoláyan, in their study entitled, “African Immigrant Families in the United States: Surviving the Sociocultural Tide,” found that despite the numerous challenges that African immigrants face in settling in America, they

⁸ Thomas Y. Owusu, “Transnationalism among African Immigrants in North America: The Case of Ghanaians in Canada,” *Journal of International Migration and Integration / Revue de l'integration et de La Migration Internationale* 4, no. 3 (September 1, 2003): 395-413, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12134-003-1027-x>.

never lose sight of their cultural connectedness. They still see education as a major factor to the realization of their American dream and despite all the challenges they face, they succeed in “raising their children and in surviving the cultural shocks.”⁹ This desire for cultural connectedness many times makes the African immigrants look back with nostalgia to the spiritual activities and practices that nurtured them to become who they are today and have a desire to see the same spiritual nurture reciprocated in their children.

American Dream and Socio-Economic and Political Development

African immigrants’ stay in America, however, may still be a gateway to better social and economic improvement. In their study entitled, “Critical Analysis of the Educational Success of African Immigrants and African Americans in the U.S.,” Giraldo-Garcia, and Bagaka contend that the American dream for the immigrants involves opportunities for economic improvement. America provides a chance for the immigrants to work hard and long hours enough to guarantee upward social and economic mobility.

Talking of upward social and economic mobility presumes that a day will come when African immigrants will compete favorably with their American-born counterparts without the race factor coming into focus. This upward mobility will also require political leverage. In fact, the recent election of Ilhan Omar by Minnesotans as the country’s first Somali-American Muslim woman legislator¹⁰ is an indication of the

⁹ Festus E. Obiakor and Michael O. Afoláyan, “African Immigrant Families in the United States: Surviving the Sociocultural Tide,” *The Family Journal* 15, no. 3 (July 1, 2007): 265-70, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1066480707301425>.

¹⁰ Emily Tate, “Minnesota Just Elected the Country’s First Somali-American Muslim Woman Legislator,” *Huffington Post*, November 9, 2016, sec. Politics, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/ilhan-omar-elected-to-minnesota-legislature_us_58228c5be4b0aac624882078.

positive strides that African immigrants are making towards achieving political leverage and in essence realization of the American dream by immigrants.

In her submission in *The Huffington Post*, Omar said, “It is the land of liberty and justice for all, but we have to work for it. Our democracy is great, but it’s fragile. It’s come through a lot of progress, and we need to continue that progress to make it actually ‘justice for all.’”¹¹ That is the resilience that drives the African immigrants that desire to improve their own estate through hard work.

The StarTribune, on the other hand, captured well the African immigrant American dream encapsulated in the heart of every immigrant in the following words: “Omar’s story is just the latest in a long line of oppressed people coming to the United States, grabbing hold of the country’s democratic levers and demanding equality and opportunity mirroring the journey of Irish, Jewish and other immigrant groups.”¹²

American Dream and the Place of God

Perhaps the next question that I need to address relates to the place of God in the African immigrants’ pursuit for the American dream. How do the African immigrants view their relationship with God now *vis-a-vis* when they were back in Africa? At the heart of the African immigrant is the idea of God and the church. African immigrants attribute their coming to America as an act of God. Whenever they look back to the long process of applying for a green card and visa applications, many African immigrants will

¹¹ Tate.

¹² “Ilhan Omar Will Be Nation’s First Somali-American Legislator,” *Star Tribune*, accessed September 10, 2017, <http://www.startribune.com/ilhan-omar-will-be-nation-s-first-somali-american-legislator/400478961/>.

automatically attribute their presence in America as an act of mercy and grace of God.

After all, how many apply to come to America and are denied a visa!

This is the driving force among the African immigrant Seventh-day Adventists to establish new congregations each place they settle in America. Statistics obtained from the church's website,¹³ indicates that there are close to 20 congregations that are purely attended by African immigrants out of 107 Seventh-day Adventist churches in Minnesota. This figure underscores how the African immigrants view their relationship to God and who He is to them.

Like the New Testament disciples of Jesus whom the Sacred Scripture records ("But the believers who were scattered preached the Good News about Jesus wherever they went" (Acts 8:4 NLT)), the African immigrants have always been establishing new churches wherever they find themselves. Once these new churches are established, they embark on worship services akin those done in their mother countries. Their songs are often sung in their African dialects and some of the liturgies are exactly like that of their motherland. These worship services bring a sense of community to the members who keep their way of worshipping God which involves nurturing faith through Bible study and preaching.

I must emphasize here that African immigrants in America are often faced with external threats and uncertainties, such as outright racism and police brutality. In 2017 as I am writing this thesis, it is recorded that 309 black people were killed in the year 2016

¹³ "Find a Church: Minnesota Conference of Seventh-Day Adventists Maple Grove MN," accessed September 12, 2017, <http://www.mnsda.com/article/107/directories/find-a-church>.

alone and 189 black people have been killed by the police in the year 2017.¹⁴ With such existential threats, religion and God becomes the solace for the African immigrant communities. In fact, Jurgen Habermas once asserted,

In an age of secularization and scientification, religion remains a major factor in the moral education and motivation of individuals uprooted from other traditions, at the very least, in an age of accelerating homogenization and simultaneous manufacturing of difference, what sociologists of globalization have called *glocalization*, religions are articulated as the last refuge of unadulterated difference, the last reservoir of cultural autonomy.¹⁵

In other words, Habermas is saying that when external threats threaten the existence of any society's traditions, her people tend to be bound together with what they hold in common, and in this case it is religion. The African immigrants' relationship with God therefore is hinged partially on such threats and hopes for a future in God who has the ability to end racial discrimination and bring peace by "making both one, and breaking down the middle wall of partition, the enmities in his flesh" (Ephesians 2:14 CEV). Secondly, the moral education that Habermas talks about is passed on in the form of catechetical teachings to the young and adults alike through church services with an intention of not only forming morals, but also faith in God, who keeps the community despite the movements from one continent to another.

African immigrants feel that the environment in America does so little to nurture faith as compared to their place of origin in Africa. Some researchers such as Douglas S. Moussey and Monica Espinoza Higgins believe that, "reported church attendance at

¹⁴ "Police Killed at Least 309 Black People in the U.S. in 2016," *Mapping Police Violence*, accessed September 13, 2017, <https://mappingpoliceviolence.org/>.

¹⁵ Jürgen. Habermas and Eduardo. Mendieta, *Religion and Rationality: Essays on Reason, God and Modernity* (Cambridge: Polity, 2002), 1.

places of origin and in the United States suggest that immigration is a disruptive event that alienates immigrants from religious practice rather than ‘theologizing’ them.”¹⁶ As disruptive as it may be seen by Moussey and Higgins, for others it is the very reason why immigrants become determined not to lose their identity established by the adherence to worship of God.

In a paper that was presented at the annual meeting of the Association for the Sociology of Religion, in Atlanta, Georgia, August 15, 2003, Abolade Ezekiel Olagoke argues that “fleeing oppressive regimes, social and political dislocation, ethnic strives and religious persecution, African immigrants have established churches and African Christian Fellowships, which have dotted the cities, college campuses and suburbs of the United States.”¹⁷ Although the categories that Olagoke lists above may not fall in the category of those who came to America specifically to pursue the American dream, the springing up of places of worship for God in “unlikely” places nonetheless emphasizes the place of God in the hearts of African immigrants and how they perceive God in their lives.

African immigrants, therefore, count themselves to be part of God’s plan of making Himself known to the world, especially to the post-Christian America. This doesn’t mean to suggest that America is a nation devoid of God’s word and guidance, nor is it an adulation of the African immigrant’s religiosity. Rather, the very act of

¹⁶ Douglas S. Massey and Monica Espinoza Higgins, “The Effect of Immigration on Religious Belief and Practice: A Theologizing or Alienating Experience?,” *Social Science Research* 40, no. 5 (September 2011): 1371–89, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssresearch.2010.04.012>.

¹⁷ “Religion and Globalization: African Christians in the United States, a Paper Written by Abolade Ezekiel Olagoke,” accessed September 13, 2017, <http://hrr.hartsem.edu/sociology/olagoke.html>.

establishing new congregations that minister to immigrant communities in a distinctly African way makes the immigrants count themselves to be to post Christian America what Joseph was to Egypt (Genesis 45:7; Psalms 105:17-22); or what Daniel, Meshach, Shadrack and Abednego were to Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonians (Daniel 3), or what Esther was to Persia (Esther 4:14).

Overall there are contrasting challenges between what the American dream looked like in the mind of the African immigrants before and after they settle here in America. Now that they have seen the reality of American dream, they have to translate their dreams into reality. They have to work hard and long hours to improve their lives and ensure a better future. In order for their children to enjoy a quality education, the parents have to intentionally invest in their education; in terms of freedom and justice, African immigrants have to realize that both concepts require respect for individual choices as well as a strict observance of the law of the land. To realize upward social and economic mobility, African immigrants should not expect political leverage before they fully engage themselves in activities that will put them in the line of such upward movement, such as investing in education. In terms of faith in God, African immigrants should not forget the place of God in their lives in the pursuit of the American dream.

CHAPTER 3

THE MISSIO DEI

Biblical Foundations of Missio Dei

The term *Missio Dei* came into its first usage at the Willingen conference in 1952 to denote “purposes and activities of God in and for the Whole universe.”¹ In using the phrase “purpose of God,” Kirk qualifies it by citing the words of Emilio Castro that “it is the purpose of God . . . to gather the whole of creation under the Lordship of Jesus Christ in whom, by the power of the Holy Spirit, are all brought into communion with God.”²

The term “mission” means different things to different people and many times is confused with the term “missionary.” Andrew Kirk defines mission as “an expression of a deep commitment to the truth of a particular message, interpreted as good news for all people.”³ In this definition, Kirk dismisses the traditional idea that some people may have concerning mission as “the church’s activities overseas or in another culture.”⁴

Athyal and Nyce look at the mission in terms of “sending.” Their argument is that “mission is God’s sending of agents to accomplish God’s own purpose for the

¹ J. Andrew. Kirk, *What Is Mission?: Theological Explorations* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2000), 25.

² Ibid, 27.

³ Ibid. 20.

⁴ Ibid. 25.

world.”⁵ Their view of mission thus links mission with God by emphasizing the idea that there can be no mission without first understanding the mind of the sender (God) and the purpose which he intends to accomplish.⁶ Athyal and Nyce conclude that the mission of God has a two-fold center of interest: one, showing forth God’s plan of salvation and two, setting before us an example to follow.⁷

Karl Müller, in his handbook *Mission Theology: An Introduction*, cites Saverio Paventi on what he calls the 17th century understanding of the concept of a mission to include words like:

Propagation of faith, conversion of the heathen, the proclamation of the good news in the whole world, instructing the ignorance in faith, conversion of the unbelievers, apostolic proclamations, the offer of salvation to the Barbarians, the spread of the Christian religion, proclamation of the gospel of the church.⁸

All the above phrases are no longer pertinent. Instead, mission touches one’s conviction, faith, and willingness to participate in the sharing of God’s redemptive action through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The concept of sharing arises out of the conviction that God is sending an invitation to salvation to others through human instruments.

Emilio’s assertion about the purpose of God as quoted above by Kirk brings us to an important element in the discussion about the mission of God: gathering the whole

⁵ Abraham P. Gurukul and Athyal, *Mission Today: Challenges and Concerns* (Chennai: Gurukul Lutheran Theological College & Research Institute, 1998), 2.

⁶ Ibid., 25.

⁷ Ibid., 2.

⁸ Karl Müller, *Mission Theology: An Introduction* (Nettetal: Steyler Verlag-Wort und Werk, 1987), 30.

creation unto Himself. A logical question therefore would be “What could have precipitated the separation of creation from God that resulted in a different Lordship other than that of Jesus Christ?”

To answer this question, we are drawn to a time when there were unity and harmony in God’s creation in Genesis and God enjoyed sovereignty. The sacred record reveals that God created human beings and gave them freedom of will (Genesis 2:15-17).⁹ To me, this was the greatest risk that God took, because Adam and Eve had freedom to obey or rebel to God’s instructions. And indeed, they rebelled.

When creating humankind, God had made them to have dominion over the earth (Genesis 1:26-28). And by default, therefore, Adam and Eve became the rightful heirs of the earth. By deceiving Adam and Eve to disobey God, Satan took possession of this world and made it his own (Luke 4:5-6),¹⁰ a claim which Jesus doesn’t dispute when Satan offered him choices in the wilderness as he was tempting him. Repeatedly, the authors of the New Testament attest to the fact that Adam forfeited his position as the prince of this world and handed it to Satan. For example, John calls Satan, “the prince of this world” (John 14:30); Paul calls him “the god of this world” (1Corinthians 4:3-4); and John reveals that the “the whole world is under the power of the evil one” (1 John 5:19).

Paul, in the end, pictures a beautiful scenario of victory where he speaks of Jesus “handing over the kingdom to the Father after He has destroyed every ruler and every authority and power” (1Corinthians 15:24). And in verse 25-28 it states,

⁹ *The Holy Bible New Revised Standard Version* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1989), 2.

¹⁰ Luke 4:5-6: Satan, in tempting Jesus, claims to possess the kingdoms of this world and he gives them to anyone he chooses.

For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death. 27 For “God has put all things in subjection under his feet.” But when it says, “All things are put in subjection,” it is plain that this does not include the one who put all things in subjection under him. When all things are subjected to him, then the Son himself will also be subjected to the one who put all things in subjection under him, so that God may be all in all.¹¹

So at the heart of the problem of alienation lies the problem of sin, dominion and kingdom. This problem is what God wants to eliminate, and in doing so restore God’s relationship with humanity. To accomplish this purpose, God sends His son (John 20:21).

Missio Dei therefore involves the element of God sending (*missio*). However, some scholars have criticized this view by arguing that if the focus is on “sending” then there is a danger of “distancing the human act from alternate authorities and affords it an inviolate authority.”¹² In my view, one cannot distance God’s activities from human agency. If one does so, he/she will be in trouble reconciling what Paul says in 2nd Corinthians 5:20: “So we are ambassadors for Christ, since God is making his appeal through us; we entreat you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God” (NRSV).

Sending involves the sender, the messenger, the message and the recipient of the message. God is the sender and the message is that God wants to dwell with his creation forever in peace and harmony and that God wants his creation to understand that there is no more enmity between Himself and them and that God has paid in full measure their redemption and therefore he wants them to be reconciled back to Him.

Therefore, we notice that God the father is sending Christ Jesus and Jesus sends the church to the world. At His ascension, Christ promises His disciples that He will send

¹¹ *The Holy Bible New Revised Standard Version* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1989), 936.

¹² John G. Flett, *The Witness of God: The Trinity, Missio Dei, Karl Barth, and the Nature of Christian Community* (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Pub., 2010), 37.

the Holy Spirit. The book of Acts 1:18 records “but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be my witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth,” thus creating a chain among the Godhead when it comes to mission. George Vicedon thinks that whenever the word “sending” is used in reference to mission, it should refer to “the epitome of the work and working of God, so the whole of redemptive history presents itself as a history of the *Missio Dei*.”¹³ I concur with him.

In this chapter, therefore, I will discuss the Biblical foundations of mission. I will discuss how God has always been a God of mission since creation, how He revealed this mission to humanity, how He chose Abraham and how He promised to make him great and a father of many nations through whom the world was to know God’s Mission. I will also discuss how Israel is the nation chosen and called by God and her role in this mission; Jesus and the mission of God and finally I will discuss the church and the mission.

God With a Mission: Revelation of God’s Mission to Humanity

In this section, I am going to trace the origin of God’s mission as revealed in the bible. I will examine both the texts found in the Old Testament and in the New Testament.

The Old Testament and God’s Mission

¹³ As quoted in *ibid.*, 41.

Christopher J. Wright, in his book *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Great Narrative*, asserts correctly that “the Bible renders to us the story of God’s mission through God’s people in their engagement with God’s world for the sake of the whole of God’s creation.”¹⁴ Then the question automatically arises in our mind, what is this mission all about?

In the Bible, especially the book of Genesis chapter 1-3, we discover that human beings are part of that good creation that God created. Apart from that, He specifically created them in his own image and likeness (Genesis 2:27), and He placed them in an ideal situation in the Garden of Eden. Here Adam and Eve enjoyed a perfect relationship with God and each other.

God intended to have fellowship with His creatures forever, but when Adam and Eve gave in to temptation, they overstepped their boundaries and hence plunged humanity into sin. The intended fellowship and harmony that God hoped to have with humanity forever were disrupted, giving in to shame and guilt, which created a barrier between God and man. The immediate consequence was that they had to hide “among the trees” (Genesis 3:8). God comes looking for them. God’s intention is not necessarily to punish them, but rather, to restore the broken relationship. Charles R. Taber captures this thought very well in his article *Missiology and the Bible*, where he notes that, “the very existence of the Bible is incontrovertible evidence of the God who refused to forsake his rebellious creation, who refused to give up, who was and is determined to redeem and

¹⁴ Christopher J. H. Wright, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2006), 22.

restore the fallen creation to its original design.”¹⁵ So immediately when Adam and Eve disobey God and listened to the usurper of the kingdom of God, God activated his mission to restore the broken relationship (Genesis 3:9-19).

Notice the promise of a redeemer in Genesis 3:15: “And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel” (KJV). Here is the promise of a savior Jesus who will redeem God’s people from the bondage of sin. He is referred to as “the seed of the woman” who will crush the serpent’s head. This pronouncement of hope became the springboard for faith in God’s deliverance right from Adam and Eve who heard God speak to them and to the rest of their offspring.

Down the lane, Adam and Eve give birth to children and grandchildren and within the time the entire world is populated. However, the great controversy between Satan and God didn’t end in Eden. The descendants of Adam increase their rebellion against God and evil multiplies on the face of the earth. Cain murders his brother Abel (Genesis 4), and later Cain is driven out and becomes a “fugitive and wanderer on earth” (Genesis 4:14). God’s mission seemed to fail. However, God was not yet done with him. He shows His grace by putting a mark on Him that no one should kill him (Genesis 4:16). Because of the wickedness of man, God decided to destroy the world with the flood (Genesis 7). Noah finds favor in God’s eyes and God uses him as “a preacher of righteousness” (2 Peter 2:4-5), yet poor Noah managed to convince only eight souls.

¹⁵ C. R. Taber, “Missiology and the Bible,” *Missiology: An International Review* 11, no. 2 (1983): 232.

God promises Noah, “I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake; for the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth; neither will I again smite any more everything living, as I have done.” (Genesis 8:21-22). He does this by entering into a covenant with Noah and by swearing to Himself not to destroy the earth again with water of the flood. So here we again see the mission of God is to redeem the earth and humanity back to himself.

God, in line with his mission, calls Abraham (Genesis 12) and makes a promise of blessing the entire world by establishing a covenant:

And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee. And I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God. And God said unto Abraham, Thou shalt keep my covenant therefore, thou, and thy seed after thee in their generations (Genesis 17:7-9 KJV).

Later God establishes the nation of Israel and affirms his promise of restoring mankind to Himself (Genesis 17:19-22). In establishing Israel as His chosen nation through whom the entire world will be blessed (Genesis 18:18), God expected them to keep the covenant He had made with them (Genesis 18:19). In His divine wisdom, God had specific purposes in his choice of Abraham and his offspring by faith (Galatians 3:29). God wanted them to be recipients and guardians of the heavenly truth that was quickly fading from His people; secondly, God wanted Abraham's lineage to be the way

through which a Savior will be born, and lastly, God expected Abraham and his offspring to be channels and beacons of God's faithfulness to His people by their conduct and faith.

Genesis 12:1-3 portrays Abram (the name means the father is exalted) who later is renamed Abraham (meaning, "the father of Multitudes") as a pagan called to leave his country and move out by faith to accept and believe the unseen, and to do what seems impossible. Nevertheless, he chooses to obey, leaving his country with a couple of relatives, notable among them, Lot, his nephew. By divine providence, after separation with Lot over the grazing field dispute between their herdsmen, Lot falls into trouble with the Kings of Sodom and is captured. Abraham is forced not only to rescue him but also have an opportunity to testify to them of the Mighty God. Ellen G. White writes,

To Abraham, under God, the triumph was due. The worshiper of Jehovah had not only rendered a great service to the country, but had proved himself a man of valor. It was seen that righteousness is not cowardice, and that Abraham's religion made him courageous in maintaining the right and defending the oppressed. His heroic act gave him a widespread influence among the surrounding tribes.¹⁶

It should be noted that Abraham, when he accepted his call didn't know where he was going (Hebrews 11:8 NIV). In terms of the mission of God, God wanted Abraham to move by faith and not by sight. Interestingly, the New Testament will inform us that Abraham was looking to "the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God" (Hebrew 11:10; NIV).

¹⁶ Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Pub. Association, 1890), 135.

In her book *Education* Ellen G. White writes of Abraham as a man who was passionate about the mission of God even in his own house:

God called Abraham to be a teacher of His word, He chose him to be the father of a great nation, because He saw that Abraham would instruct his children and his household in the principles of God's law. And that which gave power to Abraham's teaching was the influence of his own life. His great household consisted of more than a thousand souls, many of them head of families, and not a few but newly converted from heathenism.¹⁷

Even when the children of Israel ended up in Egypt as slaves, God kept his promise and covenant (Exodus 6:5-8). He liberated them with a mighty hand and restated to them that He was their "Lord."

Later on, God would establish priests, judges, kings, and prophets to remind His people of their obligation to keep the covenant terms. The scripture recounts that some rebelled against Him and were scattered and destroyed (Ezekiel 20:13; Isaiah 1:2-20; Jeremiah 35:17) though others remained loyal to the covenantal terms. Because of such lapses, God had to warn them several times by sending them reminders which were meant to remind the Israelites that He had chosen them to be "a witnessing and mediating people, and these attributes would seem to demand activity outwards to the rest of the world somewhat akin to our missionary apostolate."¹⁸ Power notes that Israel failed in

¹⁷ Ellen Gould Harmon White, *Education* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Pub. Association, 1942), 187.

¹⁸ John Power, *Mission Theology Today* (Dublin: Gill and MacMillan, 1970), 59.

this God-given opportunity to participate in the mission of God as far as the records of the Old Testament are concerned.

All the exile experiences were opportunities for Israel to communicate to the nations that God who had chosen Israel wanted the whole world to know that He is their God too. Ellen White writing about Israel says,

He had called them to preserve among men the knowledge of His law, and of the symbols and prophecies that pointed to the Saviour. He desired them to be as wells of salvation to the world. What Abraham was in the land of his sojourn, what Joseph was in Egypt, and Daniel in the courts of Babylon, the Hebrew people were to be among the nations. They were to reveal God to men.¹⁹

Later on when they settled in Canaan, Ellen G White writes that the Israelites got a different occupation. She writes,

But the Israelites fixed their hopes upon worldly greatness. From the time of their entrance to the land of Canaan, they departed from the commandments of God, and followed the ways of the heathen. It was in vain that God sent them warning by His prophets. In vain they suffered the chastisement of heathen oppression. Every reformation was followed by deeper apostasy. Had Israel been true to God, He could have accomplished His purpose through their honor and exaltation. If they had walked in the ways of obedience, He would have made them "high above all nations which He hath made, in praise, and in name, and in honor." "All people of the earth," said Moses, "shall see that thou art called by the name of the Lord; and they shall be afraid of thee." "The nations which shall hear all these statutes" shall say, "Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people." Deuteronomy 26:19; 28:10; 4:6. But because of their unfaithfulness, God's purpose could be wrought out only through continued adversity and humiliation.²⁰

¹⁹ Ellen Gould Harmon White, *The Desire of the Ages*, 5th ed. (Silver Spring, MD: Better Living Publications, 1990), 6, <http://www.whiteestate.org/books/da/da2.html>.

²⁰ Ibid.

God was acting on a principle of particularism in order to universalism. Under this principle, God made a covenant with all humanity by virtue of Him being the Creator, then turns to one people (Israel) and commands them to be different in order to teach humanity the dignity of difference in terms of faith, love and mission (Deuteronomy 7:7, KJV). The prophet Amos captures this idea well when he says:

Are not you Israelites the same to me as the Cushites? Declares the Lord. “Did I not bring Israel up from Egypt, the Philistines from Caphtor and the Arameans from Kir?

The other example is captured in Psalm 137, where the psalmist records the response of the Israelites thus:

By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea, we wept, when we remembered Zion. We hanged our harps upon the willows in the midst thereof. For there they that carried us away captive required of us a song; and they that wasted us required of us mirth, saying, sing us one of the songs of Zion. How shall we sing the LORD'S song in a strange land?²¹

Power captures this scenario of Israel's failure to accomplish the mission of God in the following words:

Israel's consciousness of her uniqueness as the one chosen nation of Yahweh, and her incessant struggle for surviving, combined to form a kind of siege mentality, and an inward-looking, Jerusalem centered religion that could not succeed in blossoming into a missionary mentality.²²

This scenario is repeatedly seen among the prophets in the Old Testament when prophets lamented about Israel's departure from the ways of the Lord and in many cases threatening them with imminent destruction. For example Micah who was a

²¹ Psalms 137:1-4.

²² Power, *Mission Theology Today*, 63.

contemporary of Isaiah wails of the injustices done to the poor by the rich (Micah 2:1-5). Instead of people listening to God's call for repentance, Micah 2:6, tells us that Micah is forbidden from sending reproofs. The reason given for such a directive is that, Micah constantly finds fault with them. In fact verse 6 ends with the false assurance that "disgrace will not overtake us." With such false safety, it was hard for them to become mission oriented.

In general terms, we notice that throughout the Old Testament God remained constant and consistent in His mission of restoring the fallen humanity back to his fold (Deuteronomy 30:4-7). In every generation, God always had a people who were willing to be partners with him in His mission. For example, during the time of Noah, Noah and his family stood out (Genesis 6:9).

In His bid to awaken Israel from slumber to action, God would raise prophets such as Jeremiah in moments when Israel as a chosen people wandered away from their God of mission. For instance, Jeremiah envisioned a time when the messiah will reign, he says, "At that time they shall call Jerusalem the throne of the Lord; and all the nations shall be gathered unto it, to the name of the Lord, to Jerusalem: neither shall they walk any more after the imagination of their evil heart" (Jeremiah 3:17 KJV). Isaiah would do the same thing to awaken the slumbering nation of the future of Yahweh's reign (Isaiah 2:1-4).

Deutero-Isaiah's vision of a suffering servant who ultimately heals the wounds of many and brings peace to all humans paints a picture of a savior whom the children of Israel were not ready to embrace (Isaiah 53:4-5) who eventually turns out to be the Jesus of the New Testament.

Did Israel completely fail to pass their faith to their children and future generations? My answer is No. Did God reject them completely? The answer again is NO. Notwithstanding Israel's failure to live to the highest ideals as a nation, there remained among them a people, a remnant such as Saul of Tarsus among others as we shall see in the New Testament.

Ellen Gould Harmon White, commenting on the need to reach out to our Jewish brothers and sisters she writes,

In the closing proclamation of the gospel, when special work is to be done for classes of people hitherto neglected, God expects His messengers to take particular interest in the Jewish people whom they find in all parts of the earth. As the Old Testament Scriptures are blended with the New in an explanation of Jehovah's eternal purpose, this will be to many of the Jews as the dawn of a new creation, the resurrection of the soul. As they see the Christ of the gospel dispensation portrayed in the pages of the Old Testament Scriptures, and perceive how clearly the New Testament explains the Old, their slumbering faculties will be aroused, and they will recognize Christ as the Savior of the world. Many will by faith receive Christ as their Redeemer.²³

Let me now turn to the New Testament where God's mission is embodied in the life and work of Jesus Christ, the ministry of His apostles and the call to every believer to engage in that mission.

The Mission of God in the New Testament

Matthew gives us a record of how God the Son personally takes the human form and immediately takes over the mission of God (Matthew 1:23). Mark, on the other hand, not only reveals that Jesus arrives with the Kingdom of God and inaugurates it but also calls people to join the kingdom by first repenting and believing (Mark 1:15).

²³ Ellen Gould Harmon White, *The Acts of the Apostles [in the Proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ]* (Mt. View, CA: Wiretap, 2005), 381.

Throughout Jesus' ministry, the mission of God is magnified through His preaching and acts of mercy and healing. He eventually dies as an atonement for sin, His eventual resurrection bringing hope and victory over death thus becoming a great pointer of the ultimate assurance of fellowship with God.

Christopher J. Wright captures the mission of God in the life of Jesus with the following words:

In the midst of this person saturated with scriptures, sustained by memory and hope, waiting for God steps Jesus with a mission. Jesus did not just arrive. He had a very clear conviction that he was sent. The voice of His father at baptism combined with the identity of a servant figure king and that of the Davidic Messianic king (echoing the affirmation of Psalm.2:7) both of these dimensions of his identity and role were energized with a sense of mission. The mission of the servant was both to restore Israel to YHWH and also to be the agent of God's salvation reaching to the ends of the earth (Isa 49:6).²⁴

At His ascension, He emphasized the continuity of His mission by saying, "But ye shall receive power, when the Holy Spirit is come upon you: and ye shall be my witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea and Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth" (Acts 1:8 KJV). We notice Jesus commissioning his disciples and charging them with the responsibility of preaching the good news of salvation to the world (Matthew 28:18-20).

John Power, however, notes that Jesus' method of operation seems to be one of active involvement rather than passive proclamation of the gospel when he says,

While Christ did not address His message specifically to the gentiles at any point, his whole approach and method provide the blueprint for missionary activity and mentality. He showed his disciples by deed more than by word, that the Old Testament attitude of passive waiting for the kingdom of God was not the means

²⁴ Wright, *The Mission of God*, 65.

of conversion decided upon by his father. The kingdom is finally here; he inaugurates it, but his followers must carry it to men.²⁵

Power seems to suggest that missionary work should be more seen in acts of charity and behavior than the active proclamation of the written word of God. However, in His command, Jesus did tell his disciples, “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen” (Matthew 28:19-20, KJV). It is when teaching, equipping encouraging disciples to observe all things and living an exemplary life that a Christian will effectively accomplish the mission of God.

In instructing the disciples to move to the Gentiles outside Jerusalem, Jesus was sending a clear message that He was God of Israel as well as the God of the nations (Isa. 2, 19; Ps. 148, God had other nations in mind including other nations (Matthew 24:14; Luke 13:28-29).

In His ascension speech, Jesus promised the coming of the Holy Spirit to energize all the Christians and fitting them for mission (Acts 41:4). Interestingly, Luke in this treatise writes about the disciple’s inquiry about the restoration of the kingdom of Israel, "Lord is this the time when you will restore the kingdom to Israel?" (Acts 1:6 RSV). Jesus' response clearly indicates the narrowness the disciples had taken concerning the mission of God. They had not moved beyond nationalism to embrace universalism. Jesus openly informed them that the coming of the Holy Spirit will enable them to transcend

²⁵ Power, *Mission Theology Today*, 82.

the national barriers and embrace the spirit of universalism in terms of the mission (Acts 1:8).

When finally the promise of the Holy Spirit is fulfilled at Pentecost, we notice that the disciples and the church in general heed to the call of Jesus and move against the boundaries of culture and the mission of God enlivens the church and we notice the church moving into action. In Peter's address recorded in Acts chapter 2, Peter reviews the history of Israel and then links it to Jesus as the "The Lord and Messiah," whom they crucified (Acts 2:36, RSV). Throughout the Book of Acts, we notice how the mission of God spread through the church by the help of the Holy Spirit, making the uneducated disciples bold in their proclamations (Acts 3:13) and how through miracles (Acts 3:14) and acts of mercy performed by the disciples of Jesus silenced their opponents; the assistance given to the marginalized in society and how this type of ministry led many to Christ through the work of energized believers of the New Testament Church on the mission of God.

Let me then examine Paul and how he heeded to the call to participate in the mission of God.

Paul and the Mission of God

A closer look at the writings of Paul makes me believe that his intention of preaching the gospel is best captured in his assertion of being under compulsion to preach it (οὐαὶ γάρ μοι ἐστίν)²⁶ and if he did not, he was endangering his salvation. The gospel

²⁶ 1 Corinthians 9:16 KJV.

that compels Paul, I believe, is to be read, understood, interpreted, applied as well as lived out in the context of the mission of God (*missio Dei*).

It is my conviction that Paul's claim of being under compulsion was because of catching God's mission. His long-term purpose of reclaiming and restoring all nations and the whole creation unto Himself. It is this *Missio Dei* that made Paul feel under compulsion to travel land and sea to let others know the good news about God who wants to reconcile all creation unto Himself.²⁷

Paul, in following his call for mission, came face-to-face with people of diverse cultures and ethnicities. Wright notes that "the first major council of the church was (Acts 15) was convened to consider the knot of problems caused by the success of cross-cultural church planting efforts."²⁸ This contact with people outside his culture meant that Paul had to contextualize the gospel for it to be accepted by his hearers. This was a clear departure from what other apostles did at that time and had to come at a cost. For example, the Jewish community, and indeed, some Christians, accused him of apostasy²⁹ from the Mosaic customs as regards circumcision and other Jewish customs.

Paul's own testimony of what he suffered under his own people in his attempt to reach non-Jewish Community bears witness of the kind of hostility he met. He mentions being flogged forty lashes save one as well as being stoned (2nd Corinthians 11:24-25); which attests that Paul actually "committed" the crime of "apostasy" in the eyes of the

²⁷ Colossians 1:20 KJV.

²⁸ Wright, *The Mission of God*, 191.

²⁹ Acts 21:21, 28.

Jews who in turn meted the punishments under the Jewish customs (Leviticus 24:16; Deuteronomy 25:3).

McRay maintains that the punishment meted against Paul was “abusive and humiliating.”³⁰ McRay, citing the Mishnah, observes that one third of the stripes were given on the chest and two thirds on the shoulder, while the person was bending low. One can only imagine how Paul’s upper torso must have been; and understand the rebuke he gave his opponents when he said, “henceforth let no man trouble me, for I bear on my body the marks of Jesus” (Galatians 6:7). All these things Paul suffered because of the mission of God.

Paul, in fulfilling the mission of God, endeavored to explain and propagate the gospel of grace under difficult circumstances. With his companion Barnabas, they were able to establish churches where the Jews and Gentiles worshipped together (Galatians 3:28). He endeavored to liberate the gospel from people who felt that belonging to the church required you to adhere to religious and social rites of Judaism such as circumcision. In his letters to the churches that he established, such as the Roman and Galatian, he emphasizes that Jesus Christ is the fulfilment of the promise of the Savior spoken about in the Old Testament (Galatians 3:16). Paul further argued that Christ’s coming marked the beginning of salvation for both the Jew and the Gentile by faith (Romans 10:9-10).

Paul’s message of salvation, which included Gentiles, was not easily accepted by the Jewish brothers. This is the reason they maintained that the sanctity of the Jewish

³⁰ John McRay, *Paul: His Life and Teaching* (Grand Rapids MI: Baker Academic, 2003), 49.

culture should be maintained by all those who wished to join the “elect and the covenant” people. In order to maintain such a sanctity, they required the proselytes to undergo the rite of circumcision and observance of the Torah of Moses (Galatians 2:4).

Paul, in the Letter to the Galatians, drew from the example of God’s promise to Abraham found in Genesis chapter 12:1-3 to argue his case for the inclusion of the Gentiles to the commonwealth of God. He argued that the promises of God to Abraham was for the entire humanity, and not just for Israel (Romans 10:1-11).

Hesselgrave opines that Paul’s aim was that the “believers in Rome should understand not only what God was doing but also His own message and mission.”³¹ This desire in Paul was to make known to Christians in Rome about God who already had accepted them and was not only willing to justify them, but also one who had accepted to dismantle the wall of partition that had been created between Jews and Gentiles.

Hesselgrave further points out that, as part of his mission, Paul tackles the aspect of God’s promises to Abraham and other patriarchs like Isaac and Jacob. He shows that despite the challenges and setbacks that come along the path of fulfilling these promises, God doesn’t forget any of His promises. The aspect of God’s sovereignty was key to Paul’s argument on the mission of God, especially where it touches the election of his special generation. God’s choice, Paul argues, was not based on deeds, but rather, on God’s sovereignty. Using the example of Esau and Jacob, Hesselgrave argues that “God chose them before they were born and could show themselves to be good or bad.”³²

³¹ David J. Hesselgrave, *Paradigms in Conflict: 10 Key Questions in Christian Missions Today* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2005), 44.

³² *Ibid.*, 45.

Conclusively, he argues that God could not reject Israel in her entirety since not all Israel rejected God.³³ Indeed Paul envisioned a mission that put forth the sovereignty of God at the forefront. He intended to show that God can use any person of his choice to fulfill his mission. This explains the zeal he had after his conversion experience on Damascus road where he could let his past life as a persecutor prevent him from proclaiming forth the God whom he was persecuting.

Paul, in obeying the *missio Dei*, wasn't blind to the idolatry that existed in his time. Paul came into contact with the pagan worshipers who espoused the Greek mythologies in various cities such as Lystra (Acts 14:8-20) Athens (Acts 17:16-34) and Ephesus (Acts 19:23-41). Paul's response in these scenarios points out how his aim was not to magnify himself using the many gifts that God had given him. Rather he clearly directed those who wanted to ascribe to him that which only belonged to God (Worship) to desist from doing so and instead worship God the creator. In all his preaching Paul emphasized that "this Jesus I am proclaiming is the Messiah"(Acts 17:3) This was in line with the mission of God and as a result, "And some of them were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas, along with a large number of the God-fearing Greeks and a number of the leading women" (Acts 17:4 NARSV).

The prevailing idolatry in Paul's time, especially in Athens, was abhorrent and here Paul had to deal with issues that were deeply ingrained in the culture of the Athens. Paul did not become oblivious of the culture. He was aware that the success of any mission activity will always out of necessity engage culture. Deeply rooted in their

³³ Ibid., 45.

culture, the Athenians adored their gods and were willing to “add” a new “god” into their pantheon as long as:

1. The claimed deities had some track record to their name and
2. The sponsor could afford to set up a temple, provide the sacrifices, pay the priests and so on.³⁴

In this particular Athenian discourse, Paul engaged culture in a way that lifted God and contrasted God from the Athenian gods. The response of the Athenians to Paul’s discourse showed how God is connected to their culture and how the Athenians were trying to disengage themselves from the truth of God whom they ascribed as “The Unknown God.” This engagement with culture brings forth to us the key to mission with people of diverse cultures. Any success in a mission to other cultures must not be geared to tarnishing off the claims of culture in their entirety, but rather, finding aspects of that culture that could be entry points to the gospel proclamation.

Paul’s labors, especially in Ephesus, bore fruit as many turned to the Lord to the destruction of the business of the silversmiths (Acts 19:23-27). Wright says that even the Ephesians testified, saying, Paul had argued that man-made gods are not gods at all.³⁵ It is noteworthy here that Paul’s emphasis in the mission was not a quest for numerical strength in terms of church members in his bid to do God’s mission. Rather he was concerned about the quality of believing that the people he preached to, held. His desire can be summarized based on what he wrote in his epistle to the Romans 15:15-19

³⁴ Wright, *The Mission of God*, 180.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 181.

Yet I have written you quite boldly on some points to remind you of them again, because of the grace God gave me to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles. He gave me the priestly duty of proclaiming the gospel of God, so that the Gentiles might become an offering acceptable to God, sanctified by the Holy Spirit. Therefore, I glory in Christ Jesus in my service to God. I will not venture to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me in leading the Gentiles to obey God by what I have said and done- by the power of signs and wonders, through the power of the Spirit of God. So from Jerusalem all the way around to Illyricum, I have fully proclaimed the gospel of Christ (NIV).

In his mission trips, Paul went beyond preaching to mingle with the community.

A good example is when he mingled with Aquila and Priscilla, who shared in the same profession of tent making. Priscilla and Aquila, as seen in Acts 18:18-28, became instrumental in terms of extending God's mission by instructing Apollos in their house helping him learn more about Jesus. Paul could make mention of this couple elsewhere as being so helpful to him in diverse ways. For example, he mentions them as having hosted a church in their home (1Corinthians 16:19); having put their lives on the line for the sake of Paul and the Gentile church at large as recorded in Romans 16:3-4.

Here, we learn a great truth about mission: mission is more than preaching to people about God: rather, it is living out the faith that you have in such a way that it impacts the family, the church, the community, and the nation. It is the lived out life that impacts the people that wins the people to God and compels others to join the mission.

In general terms, I can say that Paul in his pursuit of the mission of God, relied on the Holy Spirit to bring fruit in the lives of those who heard his preaching.

Paul did not feel that he had a monopoly in terms of doing the mission of God. Many times he recognized the contribution of others and normally referred to them as co-laborers (Romans 16:3). This is a principle that I feel should be applied even when thinking about faith formation. Faith formation should never be seen as a preserve of the

clergy. It should be a collaborative effort of the family, church and the community, each doing her part for the common good of the faith of the society.

Paul, as a man of mission, believed in empowering others for the ministry. Wherever he established a congregation, he left elders who went forth in advancing the work which he had begun. This explains his farewell discourse to the church in Ephesus as a clear example of how passionate Paul was to see the church continue existing even in his absence. It is in this statement recorded in Acts 20:22-28 that we are made to understand Paul's commitment to the Lord he believed in and the mission he advanced. He admonishes the elders to protect the church from erroneous teachers and teachings, warning them to be aware of false prophets, commending them to God and the grace of God, advising them to work hard, helping the poor and the weak, and admonishing them of the importance of humility in the service of God among other things.

CHAPTER 4

THE FAMILY AS A FORMING CENTER FOR FAITH IN MISSION

In this chapter, I will discuss the family as a forming center where faith and mission is nurtured and transmitted. Secondly, I will discuss the challenges facing immigrant families as faith formation centers. Lastly, I will address ways in which a family can engage in faith formation as a component in fulfilling the mission of God.

Faith Formation

Faith formation is a deliberate communal process of nurturing our relationship with God and through that process being molded to be like him through the Holy Spirit. Faith formation first and foremost, therefore, is the work of the Holy Spirit (John 16:3). The Holy Spirit does not, however, work in a vacuum. The family is an important social institution that plays an important role of mutual care of her members and giving direction to her young members in order to ensure that there is hope for the continuity of human species in the next generations. Walt Marcum is right when he says, “In a world in which it seems as if there are an infinite number of choices and possibilities in life and faith, we need to have a clear vision and understanding of where we want to go.”¹ As Christian parents, we need to ensure that our children have been grounded in the faith to

¹ Walt Marcum, *Deepening Youth Spirituality: The Youth Worker's Guide* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2001), 7.

face the future with confidence and to have assurance that the faith in God, which they have acquired while they are young, will be the springboard for the continuation of the mission of God on earth.

The Bible's admonition of this role is penned down repeatedly in the sacred pages of the Bible in the book of Proverbs: "Train children in the right way, and when they are old they will not stray" (Proverbs 22:6);² "while there is hope chastise your child . . ." (Proverbs 19:18). The parents therefore are reminded of their calling "to train" and "to bring up" young children during the formative years in which their faith and commitment to the call of God takes shape.

The unfortunate part is that the world in which our children are growing is a "post-Christendom" world, a world in which the everyday and ordinary structures surrounding families do not explicitly support Christianity in the ways perhaps we nostalgically think they did in the past. As children enter the adolescent phase of their life, they are expected to develop their moral values, personal identity, a basic shape and content to their faith. Lack of parental guidance and key faith-shaping experiences at this stage can mean that these adolescents will experience a conflict between the metaphysical speculations in a post-Christendom world and the faith or spirituality for which their parents advocate. In such a circumstance, parents face challenges of raising kids in a world in which there are many vibrant expressions of faith which often contradict each other. So how do you raise children who are deeply situated in a specific faith, who are

² Oxford University Press, *The Complete Parallel Bible: Containing the Old and New Testaments with the Apocryphal/Deuterocanonical Books: New Revised Standard Version, Revised English Bible, New American Bible, New Jerusalem Bible* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 1404.

deeply loyal to your specific tradition, but who can function in world which is multi-religious, multi-racial, multi-cultural?

John Roberto, in his book *Faith Formation 2020*, captures the dilemma that the church is facing regarding this generation in terms of faith formation in the following words:

Combined with the trend towards fewer Christians and the growing number of religiously unaffiliated, it appears that succeeding generations of Christians are less likely to be exposed to formation in the Christian faith because worship attendance is down, and therefore participation in church life, education and activities is likewise down. This means less exposure to the Christian tradition and teachings, reduced opportunities to experience the Christian life, and far less reinforcement of the Christian faith in church settings.

Roberto doesn't stop at giving the diagnosis of the problem. He presents activities, faith formation programs and resources that are appropriate for faith formation, such as participating in Sunday services regularly, important church festivals like Christmas, Advent, Lent, and Holy Week, monthly family learning programs on religious themes, annual spiritual formation retreat experiences, and family home practices such as reading the bible, celebrating rituals and traditions, and praying.³ So Roberto is speaking about "curation" as a key element, but he also emphasizes the shared nature of worship in a congregational setting.

I must emphasize here that faith is always and only formed by the power of the Holy Spirit through personal trusted relationships in the home, church and the community. When the community, the home and the church are ignored, therefore, faith formation in children and

³ John Roberto, *Faithformation2020: Designing the Future of Faith Formation* (Naugatuck, CT: LifelongFaith Associates, 2010), 45.

adults cannot take root. Faith formation is intentional and purposeful and requires mentors with a vision that values the role of the home, family, church and the community. The church, the home and the community therefore play a vital role of passing on faith, values and character formation.

The Family, Faith Formation and Mission of God

Whatever our families are like, it is our call to live out our faith and participate in the mission of God. But what does it mean to live our faith in the family? After all, what is the family? These questions and others are the focus of this chapter.

Our world is fast changing, and with such changes comes diversity of views regarding what the definition of the family is. Politicians, feminists and human rights advocates define the term “family” differently. Even in the religious sphere the term “family” differs from one religious tradition to another. My definition of the family in this study refers to the composition of a father, mother, children who live in the same household and are related by blood, marriage or adoption.

Rodney Clapp, in his book *Families at The Crossroads: Beyond Traditional and Modern Options*, observes that “the twentieth-century evangelicals consider the family the foundation of the world, the ground they walk upon.” He further notes that the family has in recent times becomes a symbol to evangelicals, a symbol of social stability and traditional moral virtue.”⁴ So in the eyes of evangelicals, according to Clapp, the upheavals that are witnessed in the world today are as a result of the “enemies of America

⁴ Rodney Clapp, *Families at the Crossroads: Beyond Traditional & Modern Options* (Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press, 1993), 10.

who attack the home and family in order to destroy the nation.”⁵ Thus, according to the evangelical narrative, any change that occurs to the structure of the family (father, mother and children) is an attack on the faith and eventually the mission of God.

The family cannot be discussed without looking at the environment in the home. Writing on the importance of the atmosphere in the home, Ellen Gould in her book *The Adventist Home*, states that,

The elevation or deterioration of the future of society will be determined by the manners and morals of the youth growing up around us. As the youth are educated, and as their characters are molded in their childhood to virtuous habits, self-control, and temperance, so will their influence be upon society. If they are left unenlightened and uncontrolled, and as the result become self-willed, intemperate in appetite and passion, so will be their future influence in molding society. The company which the young now keep, the habits they now form, and the principles they now adopt are the index to the state of society for years to come.⁶

When Christ is lived and celebrated in the home and the church, God’s people will be prepared to live and share their faith in a way that will impact the young who are born in such an environment positively towards accepting the faith of their parents, the church and the community. The quality of relationship in the family will determine the level of commitment to things pertaining to God and mission. Merton P. Strommen and Richard A. Hardel are of the opinion that the home, and family, by extension is the first place for teaching and nurturing faith.⁷

⁵ Clapp, 11.

⁶ “Ellen G. White Writings in Multiple Languages,” accessed September 14, 2017, https://egwwritings.org/?ref=en_AH.15.2¶=128.40.

⁷ Merton P. Strommen and Dick Hardel, *Passing on the Faith: A Radical New Model for Youth and Family Ministry* (Winona, St. Mary’s Press/Christian Brothers Publications, 2000), 24.

In this regard, Frazier argues that for a meaningful spiritual development in a family, there must be trust. This trust comes as a result of the relationships that play out within a family setting. The relational bonds, the behavior of people around children, a feeling of belonging, rituals and patterns and routines within the family help children to develop spiritually⁸. Therefore, it is important that the family should support her young ones to articulate their belief system by living a life where trust is predominant.

Richard P. Olson and Joe H. Leonard in their book *A New Day for Family Ministry* make a remarkable commentary on the importance of the family based on their understanding of three fields of study, that is: sociology, psychology and theology. From the sociological point of view, the family provides “mutual care and of bearing and guiding the next generation.” From the psychological point of view, the family “hurts and heals her members.” From the theological view, the family is “significant in keeping the covenant with God and with contributing to the covenant’s continuity from generation to generation.” These three functions are accomplished by what the family does in guiding, disciplining, teaching and modeling by way of encouragement.⁹

However, it is noteworthy to say that it is possible for a family to practice trust and yet for the children in that family to fail to develop faith in God and ultimately the vision of God. For the child to effectively develop faith in God, the family must be functionally literate in terms of sharing their faith through Bible stories among other means of propagating the faith. To underscore this point, Elizabeth F. Caldwell laments:

⁸ Elizabeth. Conde-Frazier, *Listen to the Children: Conversations with Immigrant Families* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 2011), 50, 51.

⁹ Richard P. and Olson, *A New Day for Family Ministry* (Bethesda, Alban Institute, 1996), 1.

Children grow up Biblically illiterate in homes where Bibles abound but are rarely opened. We have become a generation incapable of passing on the stories of our faith. The face of our faith has become extremely impoverished. Instead of being rich banquets, feasts of faith and community, our tables of faith become barren with barely enough bread and water to satisfy, and we try to sustain ourselves on this meager diet.¹⁰

With Caldwell's thoughts in mind, therefore, the ministry of the family needs to become a center whereby the word of God is given a priority to ensure that the family once again becomes a satisfying, joyful and faith-affirming institution that will ensure the perpetuity of the mission of God. Economically, as a family we have to embrace activities that will ensure that we have a means to support our families without neglecting our role as faith forming centers. Socially, our interactions with our children and society should be intentional in the sense that they must always promote faith through our words and deeds. Politically, we must promote justice, equity, and respect for the constitution and other provisions that make one a good citizen worthy to be emulated. And theologically, we should be "the light and salt of the world" (Matthew 5:13-16). It is through the family that "God enters into partnership with His creatures to give life and future to the creation."¹¹

For our families to be centers for the perpetuity of the mission of God, they require both affirmation and action. Such affirmation can be provided by family members, supportive peer groups as well as cross-generational friendships who will be able to lead the family in scripture reading, sharing of personal experiences with God

¹⁰ Caldwell, *Making a Home for Faith*, 7.

¹¹ James A. Nestingen, *Living out Our Callings at Home* (St. Paul, MN: Centered Life, 2003), 12.

(testimonies), and telling stories of accumulated wisdom on how God has led them in the past. Donald M. Joy is right when he writes

History stands witness to the fact that no tribe or nation survives for long when it neglects to pass along its values- that store of treasured beliefs and practices which it holds dearer than life. And the Long history of man is chiefly the account of families, tribes, and nations who have patiently and persistently loved and protected their young.¹²

And indeed, it is our duty as adults to do our role to pass these treasures to our children as a church and community. Kenda Creasy Dean writes in her book *Almost Christian: What the Faith of Our Teenagers Is Telling American Church* that, “. . . the religiosity of American teenagers must be read primarily as a reflection of their parent’s religious devotion (or lack thereof) and, by extension, that of their congregations.”¹³ She further argues that what is often seen as lack of faith among the youth is just a symptom of the society in the 21st century as a whole. This begs the question: Is the American dream negating faith formation or are the forces of the 21st-century changes in the society to blame? How can parents, the church and society respond to these changes? Dean Creasy, strongly objects to the idea of trying to “fix” the spirituality of the youth and instead suggests that a solution needs to be sought elsewhere. She directs the search for the answers to the adults themselves when she says,

Since the issues of the religious and spiritual choices of American teenagers echo, with astonishing clarity, the religious and spiritual choices of the adult who love them, lackadaisical faith is not young people’s issue but ours. Most teenagers are perfectly content with their religious worldviews; it is churches that are rightly-concerned. So we must assume that the solution lies not in beefing up

¹² Roy B. Zuck and Robert E. Clark, *Childhood Education in the Church* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1975), 9.

¹³ Kenda Creasy Dean, *Almost Christian: What the Faith of Our Teenagers Is Telling the American Church* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 3-4.

congregational youth programs or making worship more “cool” and attractive, but in modeling the kind of mature, passionate faith we say we want young people to have.¹⁴

Indeed, I agree with her that parents have a task not just to instruct, but to live as role models. We may work all day long to provide them with whatever physical needs they need, we may endeavor to take them to the best churches with programs tailored for the young, we even may employ the counselors to counsel them on their “alleged moral lapses,” but as good as those initiatives may look, if we do not become their best role models, then all our efforts amount to nothing. In doing our part, we should however remember that, ultimately, it is God who grants faith and the Holy Spirit who nourishes it.

The Bible narrative about the family reveals God entering into history, acting to redeem a people, entering into covenant with them, and giving out promises of making this family a great nation through whom all nations shall be blessed.¹⁵ In the book of Genesis chapter 15, we notice, Abram, expresses the importance of the family by asking God a question worth our notice:

O lord God, what will you give me, for I continue childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus? And Abram said, you have given me no offspring, and so a slave born in my house is to be my heir.¹⁶

¹⁴ Dean, 4.

¹⁵ Genesis 12:1-9 presents the call of Abraham in a way reveals the intention of God to make the experience of one family a model of what a mission field means to God. In one way, the willingness of Abraham to obey God’s call is a response based on the willingness of the family of Abraham to participate in the Missio Dei.

¹⁶ Genesis 15:2, 3 (NRSV).

This conversation ends not only with God promising Abram an heir, but also a revelation to Abraham that and his descendants will pass through a hard time as aliens until such a time as God will restore them from their enemies (Genesis 15:13-16).

Later in the book of Deuteronomy chapter 6:6-9, the families of Israel were asked to pass on their faith to their offspring in family gatherings:

These words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand and they shall be as frontals on your forehead. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.¹⁷

So in a way we realize that the altar where worship was carried out in the ancient Jewish setting was first and foremost in the family. Marjorie J Thompson notes, “Each home had a central sacred place for prayer and remembrance of greater spiritual realities in daily life.”¹⁸ In such a family setting, the father and mother acted as the priest and priestesses of the family. This is the reason why I think the psalmist will write and say, “Your statutes have been my songs wherever I make my home” (Psalm 119:54 NRSV).

When a home becomes a center of faith formation, the family members will be united in learning songs of praise to God, sharing of God’s word and carrying this message of salvation wherever they make a home whether temporal one or a permanent one.

Caldwell dwells on this idea of family worship and throws weight on matters of family worship by asserting that it is the duty of the church to “support and educate

¹⁷ Deuteronomy 6:6, 7, 8, 9.

¹⁸ Marjorie J. Thompson, *Family, the Forming Center* (Nashville: Upper Room Books, 1996), 25.

adults” in ways that will ensure that their homes and families become centers of worship where “parents become able to read a biblical story with their children, listen to their questions, and struggles with answers together. Setting a table in our homes means we have time for rituals, for practices that form us in our faith and sustain us as we leave home to journey into the world. Journeys or pilgrimages in faith require faithful homemaking and table setting.”¹⁹ For that to occur, the adult members’ of the home for this case the parents must be able to understand how faith development takes place in the life of a child.

Shirley K Morgenthaler²⁰ outlines five areas which she thinks are very important for the parents to know about the development of spiritual life in their children:

1. The neurological organization and developmental state of the child which issues to deal with receptivity, comprehension organization and incorporation of beliefs of into a child’s conscious awareness and understanding;
2. The opportunity of exposure of the child; enables the development of the religious beliefs through exposing the child to concepts, ideas and practices;
3. The availability of adult individuals who can provide focused interpretations, translation, and explanation so that understanding can be acquired at a child’s particular level of neurological organization and development,

¹⁹ Caldwell, *Making a Home for Faith*, 7.

²⁰ Shirley K. Morgenthaler, *Exploring Children’s Spiritual Formation: Foundational Issues* (River Forest: Pillars Press, 1999), 57.

4. The position of the child within the family, community, church,, and social structure that provides support, recognition and affirmation for the child enabling the child to work through development and establishment of religious beliefs.
5. Children need the appropriate time and environment to make it possible for them to internalize these beliefs. When they have time and enabling environment, they are able to create a framework and organization for their beliefs that they can then use as a basis for life decisions and actions.²¹

Speaking on the need for a conducive environment in the home, Morgenthaler notes that if children grow up in an environment which is abusive, “they carry lifelong handicaps that not only interfere with their life in general, but also seriously interfere with their spiritual development.”²² Therefore, for effective spiritual development, the family should try as much as possible to eliminate any trace emotional or physical abuse of the child in order to minimize the chances of the child developing resentment to the spiritual development taking place in the child’s life.

In one of the examples of how various congregations have developed innovative ways for parents to nurture their children’s faith, Strommen and Hardel enumerate some of the underlying assumptions of a successful faith forming family. They argue that the family should be seen and regarded as a domestic church, that family life is sacred and holy, that approaches to religious education in homes must reflect, respect and embrace

²¹ Morgenthaler, 57.

²² Ibid., 63.

the contemporary family, and that the parents should be reminded that they are the primary educators of their children in faith²³

Challenges Facing the Immigrant Families as Faith Formation Centers

Elizabeth Conde Frazier, writing about reasons why people migrate in her book *Listen to the Children: Conversation with Immigrant Families*, notes that, “parents often emigrate from their countries as a way of supporting their families. When political and economic inequalities in their home countries inhibit the parents’ access to work, the resulting hardship will influence the decision for one or more family members to immigrate to the United States.”²⁴ Because of such movements, the migrant families will do their best to settle down and find a new place where they can call home. This endeavor, however, doesn’t come without a cost. In their effort to support the family, parents will see themselves in long hours at work, which in return will expose the family to another challenge: “lack of care and love for the children because no one is at home to provide consistent care.”²⁵

Furthermore, Frazier is right in her submission that, “when children suffer from this kind of neglect, behavioral problems often emerge. In the absence of one or both parents, shared values erode, emotional bonds deteriorate, and parental authority is

²³ Strommen and Hardel, *Passing on the Faith*, 26.

²⁴ Conde-Frazier, *Listen to the Children*, x.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, xi.

affected.”²⁶ In such a scenario, faith practices will also dwindle slowly as there will be no time to share and read the word of God together as a family.

Parents in trying to make ends meet will often utilize any opportunity available to make more money. Fraizer again captures this scenario well when she asserts that,

Parents are forced to work for salaries so low that they must have several jobs, limiting their availability in the home and depleting the energy necessary for the care and upbringing of children. This places the children at risk. Because immigrant families spend more time apart than together, parents do not see their children grow up. Shared moments only occur sporadically. Such separation interrupts intimacy and the bonding that fashion the daily routines of care, cooperation, problem-solving and even conflict. The interruptions disrupt the role family member’s play, forcing changes and circumstances that may appear dysfunctional in the eyes of their community, the church and social services.²⁷

In a new setting, parents often tend to draft new rules of engagement in the family-geared towards preserving the family’s identity and cultural and spiritual beliefs. Many times these rules and laws may not be easily accepted by their children. Frazier notes that “children may interpret these rules as harsh or punitive, leading to feelings of anger compounded by grief over the loss of a familiar previous environment.”²⁸

Engaging the Family in Faith Formation as a Component in the Mission of God

There are several ways that the family can be engaged in the faith formation of her members. The following are examples of practices in which the family can participate in:

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Conde-Frazier, *Listen to the Children*, xi-xii.

²⁸ Ibid., 15.

Family Rituals

Learning occurs early in life, so when a family engages children in rituals such as prayer before a meal, a child will grow to know the importance of prayer and thanksgiving in his or her life.²⁹ The following are some of the ways a family can engage in faith formation as a component of the mission of God.

Morgenthaler believes that children traditions and rituals are very important aspects in the spiritual development of any child. She argues that rituals “serve as links between generations and between individuals within families, communities, and congregations.”³⁰ She defends her arguments by the use of the social learning theory, whereby she equates spiritual formation to the process of observation, imitation and role modeling.³¹ Her emphasis is on the fact that if spiritual themes are presented in such a way that is “perceived to be desirable and for which there is reinforcement or affirmation,” children will be able to learn and develop faith easily. In retrospect, children should be able to see role models who are consistent in their religious pursuit and dedication so as they may be able to imitate them.

For the parents to be role models to the youth, the influence at home will determine the extent to which the children can find models or characters to emulate. Ellen White, in her book *The Adventist Home*, emphasizes the far-reaching influence of the home in very clear and precious words:

²⁹ Ibid., 51.

³⁰ Morgenthaler, *Exploring Children's Spiritual Formation*, 61.

³¹ Ibid., 61.

The home in which the members are polite, courteous Christians exerts a far-reaching influence for good. Other families will mark the results attained by such a home, and will follow the example set, in their turn guarding the home against Satanic influences. The angels of God will often visit the home in which the will of God bears sway. Under the power of divine grace such a home becomes a place of refreshing to worn, weary pilgrims. By watchful guarding, self is kept from asserting itself. Correct habits are formed. There is a careful recognition of the rights of others. The faith that works by love and purifies the soul stands at the helm, presiding over the whole household. Under the hallowed influence of such a home, the principle of brotherhood laid down in the word of God is more widely recognized and obeyed.³²

Use of Religious Stories during Family Worship

Frazier argues that “religious stories are an important way that children build values and connect faith to their own experience of the world around them.”³³ These stories are very important to children as they enable the children to have the freedom to inquire about aspects of faith that they are not familiar with.

Stories have a powerful impact in forming and transforming those who listen to them. David M. Csinos and Ivy Beckwith captures the import of stories in their book entitled, *Children’s Ministry In the Way of Jesus*:

Human beings live and die by their stories. We are storied people. And the stories we hear and tell are more than simple entertainment; they have the power to form and transform who we believe our selves to be and what we believe we are called to do. The tales we recount shape the core of who we are and act as lenses through which we see and live in the world.³⁴

³² Ellen Gould Harmon White, *The Adventist Home* (: Stanborough Press Ltd United Kingdom, 1952.), 31.

³³ Nestingen, *Living out Our Callings at Home*, 12.

³⁴ David M. Csinos, *Children’s Ministry in the Way of Jesus* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2013), 81.

So then, the type of stories that we tell and share in a family setting has a great impact in the forming of faith in the child or discouraging the child from taking faith seriously in his or her life later in life. Csinos further likens stories to “a waterproof covering that protects the inside of a cable,” in doing so he argues that in a similar manner “stories form a protective barrier around what we hold as true, sacred or meaningful in the world.”³⁵ At the same time, stories affect our worldview, our interaction patterns, our value system as well as all other aspects of our being.

One of the most important sources of stories to be told to children in a family set up is the Bible. However, in using the Bible as the source of stories for spiritual formation, parents or adults in the home setting should be careful to choose age-appropriate stories and present them in a manner that will enable the children to make sense out of the stories told.

Csinos warns of the dangers of lack of diligence in the choice of age-appropriate stories of the Bible when he says, “When offered as stand-alone stories, the Bible can easily become a rigid reference on how to live a Christian life, with each story bringing a moral or a point. The moral lessons may remain shallow and disconnected from one another.”³⁶

However, if the Bible stories are presented as a way in which God reveals Himself to the human race by pointing to God as a caring parent, the children will readily embrace God as a divine parent in their life.

³⁵ Ibid., 81.

³⁶ Ibid., 83.

Stories of God in the African society were part and parcel of the daily life of the Africans. Wherever they gathered, they shared experiences in the form of stories with moral lessons. It is this telling and retelling of stories that made Mbiti in his book, *African Religions and Philosophy* to write about their experiences in the religious life. He wrote,

Africans are notoriously religious. Whenever the African is, there is religion. He carries it to the fields where he is sowing seeds or harvesting a new crop; he takes it with him to the beer party, or to attend a funeral ceremony; and if he is educated, he takes religion with him to the examination room at school or in the university; if he is a politician, he takes it to the house of parliament”³⁷
Csinos agrees with the African way of telling stories about God by asserting that if the Bible stories are presented to children bit by bit over a period of time, they will be easily assimilated and accepted by children rather than presenting the stories as “a grand epic of God’s story.”³⁸

Furthermore, Freudenberg et al.³⁹ argue that charity begins at home and therefore faith should be “taught and modeled at home.”⁴⁰ But then before the modeling is done the parents should be taught to know what faith is and how to make their families place for worship and training in matters regarding faith. It is the duty of the parent to bring up a child in a way that can make the child become a candidate of heaven.

Ellen White is of the opinion that the role of the family is to guard jealously the spirituality of her own members from Satan’s attacks and have a keen eye on their

³⁷ John S. Mbiti, *African Religions & Philosophy* (New York: Praeger, 1969), 2.

³⁸ Ibid., 84.

³⁹ Ben Freudenburg, Rick, Lawrence. “*The Friendly Church* Loveland, CO: Group publishing, 1998) 30-99

⁴⁰ Strommen and Hardel, *Passing on the Faith*, 27.

children.⁴¹ She further states the outcome that parents will obtain will bring glory and honor to God. This what she writes:

When parents are diligent and vigilant in their instruction, and train their children with an eye single to the glory of God, they co-operate with God, and God co-operates with them in the saving of the souls of the children for whom Christ has died. Religious instruction means much more than ordinary instruction. It means that you are to pray with your children, teaching them how to approach Jesus and tell Him all their wants. It means that you are to show in your life that Jesus is everything to you, and that His love makes you patient, kind, forbearing, and yet firm in commanding your children after you, as did Abraham.⁴²

Nature Walk

Nature walks will always provide an opportunity for parents to cultivate faith among children. An exploration at a zoo or a forest will expose the child to the wonders of nature. Young children will always be thrilled by the way creation is constituted. Many times, this can be a powerful entry point to introducing spiritual beliefs and embracing the kids' mind about the mission of God. The psalmist was right when he declared:

The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands.
Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they reveal knowledge.
They have no speech, they use no words; no sound is heard from them.
Yet their voice goes out into all the earth, their words to the ends of the world.
In the heavens God has pitched a tent for the sun.⁴³

⁴¹ White, *The Adventist Home*, 317.

⁴² Ibid., 317.

⁴³ "Psalm 19 NIV," accessed April 27, 2017, <http://biblehub.com/niv/psalms/19.htm>.

Vacation Bible School

Most churches organize vacation Bible school lessons for their children. During such occasions, children are led to explore different areas of life spiced with bible studies. Most of these children come from both Christian homes and non-Christian homes and they differ in terms of age groups. If the educational leaders are keen enough, this is a great opportunity for faith formation.

In her chapter on “*Understanding Juniors*,” Marjorie Soderholm argues that whenever children, especially juniors, gather together be it in a church service or club meeting, “they bring all of themselves along, sometimes to the dismay of the adult leaders. But to know junior age children is to love them. They have a keen sense of loyalty and if they know an adult appreciates them, they identify with that adult, are loyal to him, and learn much from him.”⁴⁴

Therefore, when working with the children in a vacation Bible school, the teachers must maximize the opportunities that these events afford to nurture and form faith among the children. Understanding the characteristics of the children at any particular age is therefore key to developing age-appropriate tasks and activities that can not only sustain their interest and curiosity but also go a long way in forming faith among these children.

Soderholm further notes that any activity that young children engage in must be chosen with care since most of the juniors “are on the move” and therefore “abound inactivity” and therefore any task chosen for them to do should not make them feel like

⁴⁴ Zuck and Clark, *Childhood Education in the Church*, 107.

“this is baby Stuff,” which will defeat the upper goal of faith nurturing intended in the long run.⁴⁵ It is at this period that bible stories of people in action and hero stories should be told, since these resonate well with their desire to identify with heroes.

However, great care should be taken by parents and teachers says Soderholm that it is at this age that, “they may also identify with someone who is not of high moral character, simply because that person is popular and persuasive.”⁴⁶

Parents as Role Models

Children are shaped by parenting and therefore much of what our children become is as a result of what they observe from parents. The ability of the parents to live what they preach plays a pivotal role in molding the character and life of the young ones. Donald M. Joy is of the opinion that “Intimacy and interdependence in the household makes both the parents equally available to the child, a clue which speaks to today’s concern over the learning of sex-appropriate behavior and resolving the frustrations of young males who are deprived of male models, many for most of their waking hours and some for their entire childhood.”⁴⁷

He further argues that for a child to learn what it means to “have dominion” as stipulated in the book of Genesis and to bring honor to God, is effectively done only when the child is, “walking in the shadow of a parent who lives out his teaching.”⁴⁸ In the

⁴⁵ Ibid., 108.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 108.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 11-12.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

same vein, Barbara and William Myers have also opined that “children are educated in the faith most appropriately when they are relationally connected with the adults in the activities prized by those adults.”⁴⁹ In such a scenario, virtues such as compassion are developed as part of spiritual formation through what is called *intergenerational friendships*.⁵⁰ Activities that involve parents and children therefore provide a golden opportunity for parents to demonstrate that faith in God is not an abstract idea that has no relevance in today’s world but can find expression in day to day activities that human beings engage in.

Church Home Partnership

Karen Marie Yust emphasizes the need to nurture children’s spirituality as a shared responsibility between the church and the family. She argues that to do so, the family and the church need to commit themselves to “welcome children into all aspects of the community life,”⁵¹ not as mere spectators, but as active participants. In selecting the church that can meet the needs of faith formation for their children, parents should consider among other things the openness and willingness of the ministers of the gospel to support the parents and to avail an environment which can develop a culture that is intentional enough to have innovative ways that can engage the postmodern mind of the

⁴⁹ Barbara Kimes Myers and William Myers, *Engaging in Transcendence: The Church’s Ministry and Covenant with Young Children* (Cleveland, OH: Pilgrim Press, 1992), 154.

⁵⁰ Catherine Stonehouse and Scottie May, *Listening to Children on the Spiritual Journey: Guidance for Those Who Teach and Nurture* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2010), 120.

⁵¹ Yust, *Real Kids, Real Faith*, 166.

society or community around the child without watering the importance of faith in the life of a child.

Donald M. Joy, arguing from the studies of Lawrence Kohlberg's' theory of child development, opines that, "Early, consistent saturation in a warm, Christian nurture environment helps children respond personally to Christ's call to salvation."⁵² Donald's argument is based on the premise that once a child senses right from childhood that he is loved by the caregivers, as he/she grows up to the stage of formal/abstract reasoning, he /she may sense a deep longing for God based on the experiences he/she had got when she/he was a child. However, the pitfall in this argument is in cases where a child didn't receive a warm and Christian nurturing especially those whose parents might have neglected them would then translate to the rejection of God, which may not be the case.

However, it should be noted that the wider social interactions and affections that the children receive from other sources such as teachers create an impact in their life not only intellectually, but also spiritually. Consequently, Donald concludes that "God has designed man and human relations that whatever one sows will be reaped that there are methodical means of getting desired results through training and childhood education programs in the church."⁵³

Strommen and Hardel suggest a model which entails home visitation by members of the congregation whom they call, "churched generation." This group will have a responsibility of visiting homes of parents with children at various developmental miles

⁵² Roy B. Zuck and Robert E. Clark, *Childhood Education in the Church* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1975), 19.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 20-21.

where they have an opportunity to share important spiritual information on “various aspects of faith such as prayer, communications in the home, child development and faith-informed child rearing, as well as ideas and resources for maintaining faith in the household.”⁵⁴

In implementing the church home-partnership, the church must be willing to listen to the hard theological questions that the children raise and provide honest answers to them. Drawing on an example from the book of Deuteronomy on God’s people, Catherine Stonehouse and Scottie May believe that the responsibility of faith formation rests not only on the parents, but also in the whole community of faith,

In villages and tribes where such a faith was lived, the teaching a child received at home would be reinforced and demonstrated in the life of the community. Families would gather with the whole community for an annual feasts to worship and reenact the story of what God had done for them (Deuteronomy 16:1-7). Moses did command adults to teach their children in the home, but God did not intend for a mother and the father to carry that responsibility alone. They were to be supported and assisted in that task by the whole faith community, which loved God and obeyed God and did what was right in the sight of the Lord” (Deuteronomy 6:1-7, 17, 18).⁵⁵

⁵⁴ Strommen and Hardel, *Passing on the Faith*, 28-29.

⁵⁵ Stonehouse and May, *Listening to Children on the Spiritual Journey*, 123-24.

CHAPTER 5

METHODOLOGY

This chapter discusses the methodology that this study used to collect and analyze the data. The study explored how parents articulated specific challenges they faced in nurturing the faith development of their children and the mission of God as they pursued the American dream.

Research Design

Robert V. Labaree describes a research design as the “overall strategy that you choose to integrate the different components of the study in a coherent and logical way, thereby, ensuring you will effectively address the research problem; it constitutes the blueprint for the collection, measurement, and analysis of data.”¹

Exploratory Research Design

This study utilized the exploratory research design. Exploratory research method is a branch of qualitative research that is concerned with the subjective assessment of attitudes, behavior and opinions aimed at gathering an understanding of a social phenomenon. It is a type of research that is geared towards gaining familiarity to a social phenomenon that has not been widely studied. According to John Creswell, it is:

¹ Robert V. Labaree, “Research Guides: Organizing Your Social Sciences Research Paper: Types of Research Designs,” Research Guide, accessed February 3, 2018, <http://libguides.usc.edu/writingguide/researchdesigns>.

An approach for exploring and understanding the meaning of individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem. The process research involves emerging questions and procedures, data typically collected in the participant's setting, data analysis inductively building from particulars to general themes, and the researcher making interpretations of the meaning of the data. The final written report has a flexible writing structure.²

This design was chosen primarily because of its ability to use different tools such as in-depth interviewing through focused group discussion, field visits, and document analysis to understand the phenomenon under study.

Therefore in this type of study, the respondents were involved in identifying the specific challenges that they faced in nurturing the faith of their children, participating in the mission of God and pursuing the American dream. In engaging them this way, the researcher was able to get in-depth knowledge on faith formation practices they engaged in as part of the mission of God as well as their concept of the American dream.

Locale of the Study

The researcher conducted the study among an SDA congregation called Faith International Church located in Brooklyn Park City, Minnesota. This is a congregation ministering to an international community within the Twin Cities and the surrounding areas with members from Kenya, Togo, India, Tanzania, Zambia, and members who are American born.

Faith International Seventh-day Adventist Church was selected on the basis that it has a significant number of African immigrants' families who are striving to achieve the

² John W. Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*, 4th ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 2014), 4.

American Dream at the same time trying to form the faith of their children as they fulfil the mission of God. Secondly, the attachment that the researcher has to the congregation (culture, religious background, and desire to progress the mission of God through faith formation) played a role in considering this congregation for the study.

Procedures for Data Collection

In this regard, the researcher sought to address the question: how do parents articulate the specific challenges they face in nurturing the faith development of their children and the mission of God as they pursue the American dream?

To arrive at answers to this question, the researcher did a site visit to the congregation and had a discussion with the pastor aimed at seeking official permission to conduct the study. This was followed by the researcher seeking volunteer parents who were willing to participate in the study following the criteria listed. The volunteers were requested to fill in and sign the consent form (attached in the Appendices). The human consent forms specifically indicated that the volunteer's information was to be kept confidential, but the elements of the conversation would constitute the research data.

Once the human consent forms were filled and returned to the researcher, with consultation with the church pastor of the congregation, the researcher agreed with the respondents on the date to carry out the data collection.

Since the success of this type of study largely relied on the willingness of the respondents to tell their stories and to reflect on their experiences in faith formation practices, the researcher divided the respondents into two focused groups to allow them to tell their stories according to this criterion: focus group A consisted of parents who had

children born and reared in Africa and came to America at the age of 12 and above. Table 1 below shows the distribution of the respondents of focus group 1

Table 1: Showing the Socio-Demographic Status of the Respondents of Focused Group 1

	Frequency	Percent
Gender of the respondents		
Male	5	62.5
Female	3	37.5
Total	8	100.0
Age bracket of the respondent		
30-40 years	2	25
41-50 years	4	50
50 and above	2	25
Total	8	100.0
Country of origin of the respondent		
Kenya	4	50
Zambia	1	12.5
Tanzania	3	37.5
Total	8	100

From table 1, the composition of the focused group 1 in terms of gender reveal that the male respondents represented by 62.5%, were the majority. This was due to the fact that many would be female respondents were kept out of the discussion because they would not meet the criterion set of parents who had children born and reared in Africa and came to America at the age of 12 and above. However, this does not mean that views of women are not considered.

Majority of the respondents in focus group 1 are immigrants from East Africa comprising of a cumulative 87.5% of the total number of the group. This is a true

representation of the composition of the church in general which has a higher percentage of East Africans.

Focus group 2 included young parents who came to America with their parents when they were young but now they are parents to children born in America. This was important because it enabled the researcher to compare and contrast the experiences of faith formation of the two groups.

Table 2: Showing Socio-demographic Status of Respondents of Focused Group 2

	Frequency	Percent
Gender of the respondents		
Female	5	62.5
Male	3	37.5
Total	8	100.0
Age bracket of the respondent		
25-30 years	6	75
20-24 years	2	25
Total	8	100.0
Country of origin of the respondent		
Tanzania	3	37.5
Togo	1	12.5
Kenya	2	25
Zambia	2	25
Total	8	100

Unlike Focused Group 1, Focused Group 2 comprised of more female respondents than the male respondents. This disparity in gender characterized by focused group two can be explained in terms of religious commitment. According to Pew Research

African-American women stand out for their high level of religious commitment. More than eight-in-ten black women (84%) say religion is very important to them, and roughly six-in-ten (59%) say they attend religious services at least once a

week. No group of men or women from any other racial or ethnic background exhibits comparably high levels of religious observance.³

The respondents in Focused group 2 in terms of country of origin shows that four countries were represented that is Kenya, Togo, Zambia, and Tanzania. This composition enriched the discussion in terms of understanding faith nurturing practices and roles that the family of origin played in ensuring continuity of the mission of God among their children long after they had left their hands.

The discussion was audiotaped to capture responses for purposes of ensuring accurate data which was useful when analyzing the study as well as in writing this final report. I posed open-ended structured questions to the focused groups, which offered the respondents an opportunity to reconstruct their own experience in faith formation practices in a way that they wanted, and which enabled me to get more open responses than if I had used closed-ended questions.

Sample, Sampling and Sampling Procedure

Merriam Webster defines a sample as “a finite part of a statistical population whose properties are studied to gain information about the whole.”⁴ It is a representative taken from the population of the study which has all the characteristics of the population

³ 1615 L. St NW, Suite 800 Washington, and DC 20036 USA 202-419-4300 | Main 202-419-4349 | Fax 202-419-4372 | Media Inquiries, “A Religious Portrait of African-Americans,” *Pew Research Center’s Religion & Public Life Project* (blog), January 30, 2009, <http://www.pewforum.org/2009/01/30/a-religious-portrait-of-african-americans/>.

⁴ “Definition of SAMPLE,” accessed October 8, 2017, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/sample>.

for the purposes of scrutiny to understand its components which will be generalized to describe the characteristics of the population.

Sampling is defined as “the process of selecting units (e.g., people, organizations) from a population of interest so that by studying the sample we may fairly generalize our results back to the population from which they were chosen.”⁵ In this study I employed Purposeful sampling. Purposeful sampling is a type of sampling whereby a researcher selectively relies on his / her personal judgment to choose members of the population who are rich in terms of specific and related data being sought by the researcher to participate in his/ her study. I decided to use Purposeful sampling because of the nature, aim and purpose of my study and the specific data that I needed to obtain from the population of the study. Purposeful sampling also proved not only cost-effective, but also time-saving.

The two sampled Focused Groups contained eight parents each. Focus group A consisted of families who had children born and reared in Africa and came to America at the age of 12 and above. From this group I obtained information on faith nurturing practices and roles that the family of origin played in ensuring continuity of the mission of God among their children long after they had left their hands. Focus group 2 included young parents who came to America with their parents from Africa when they were young but now they are parents to children born in America. The shape of this second group was important because it enabled me to compare and contrast the experiences of

⁵ “Sampling,” accessed October 8, 2017, <https://www.socialresearchmethods.net/kb/sampling.php>.

faith formation here with those of parents who nurtured their children's spirituality while in Africa.

Methods of Data Collection

Data collection is defined as a process of gathering and measuring information needed to study a given variable(s) during the research process. There are a number of methods that one can use depending on the type of data needed to be studied. In this study, the following data collection methods were used.

Focused Group Discussion

Since this was a qualitative study, I used the focus group discussion (FGD), as the main method of data collection. More specifically, I employed Observation, and an Interview Guide as tools in data collection.

Focus Group Discussion is a "small group of (5-15 individuals) representative members of a group whose beliefs, practices or opinions are sought."⁶ Fatemeh Rabiee, a professor in the School of Health and Policy Studies, University of Central England, Birmingham, defines Focused Group discussion as:

a technique involving the use of in-depth group interviews in which participants are selected because they are a purposive, although not necessarily representative, sampling of a specific population, this group being 'focused' on a given topic.⁷

Participants in this type of research were, therefore, selected on the criteria that they had knowledge and information to share on faith formation, *Missio Dei* and the

⁶ "6. DATA COLLECTION METHODS," accessed October 7, 2017, <http://www.fao.org/docrep/003/x2465e/x2465e09.htm>.

⁷ "S0029665104000874.Pdf," accessed October 8, 2017, <https://www.cambridge.org/core/services/aop-cambridge-core/content/view/S0029665104000874>.

mission of God and were within the age-range that I targeted, besides having similar socio-characteristics that made them feel comfortable talking to the interviewer and each other.

By asking initial questions and structuring the subsequent discussion, I obtained the information I needed. The advantage of using this method of data collection was that it enabled the researcher to obtain the opinions of the group rather than that of an individual. This group synergy provided richer data as one person's response was able to prompt/ modify another person's memory of the faith practices and experiences that enriched the study.

Secondly, it permitted the researcher to have face-to-face contact with respondents besides as well as a unique opportunity to me to combine elements of both interviewing and participant observation to understand the topic under study. Lastly, FGD had the ability to use "the group interaction to generate data and insights that would be unlikely to emerge otherwise. The technique inherently allows observation of group dynamics, discussion, and firsthand insights into the respondents' behaviors, attitudes, language, etc."⁸

Since the success of this type of study largely relied on the willingness of the respondents to tell their stories and to reflect on their experiences in faith formation practices, the researcher relied on the group's ability to develop rapport by encouraging the quiet members to participate. Secondly, since the researcher had knowledge of how the individual members reacted to certain topics before the session allowed the researcher

⁸ "Nsf02057_4.Pdf," accessed October 7, 2017, https://www.nsf.gov/pubs/2002/nsf02057/nsf02057_4.pdf.

to gauge group effect. The discussion was audiotaped for purposes of capturing accurate data which was useful when writing this final report of the study.

By use of open-ended structured questions in the focused group discussions the respondents had an opportunity to reconstruct their own experience in faith formation practices in a way that they wanted, which enabled me to get more open responses, unlike when I would have used closed- ended questions.

Review of Related Literature

I also retrieved data by reviewing books, journals, websites and other written documents in relation to the question of the American dream, Faith Formation, Missio Dei and family. In other words, I used secondary data from other projects. The need for this method of data collection was based on several considerations. First, the reviewed related literature enabled me to acquaint myself with the body of knowledge available on the American dream, faith formation, and the missio Dei. Secondly, it enabled me to navigate through the theological and theoretical methods I might employ in this study, to formulate my research question, and to enable me to bring together my experience base with my findings and the already existing body of knowledge.

Data Analysis

Cognizant of the fact that there is “no one best or correct approach to the analysis of focus group data.”⁹ I first and foremost prepared data transcript for analysis. The reason for developing a transcript of the discussion was to produce a permanent record of

⁹ “Analyzing Focus Group Data,” accessed October 7, 2017, https://www.sagepub.com/sites/default/files/upm-binaries/11007_Chapter_7.pdf.

group discussion (without revealing the personal details of the participants) and “to pick up incomplete words, half-finished thoughts and other characteristics of the spoken word in a discussion.”¹⁰

I coded the data obtained summarizing it into themes, interrelating themes and trying to find the meaning of the themes that emerged. Coding is the process of organizing and sorting data by assigning a word or a phrase or a number that distinguished the data into categories. This process helped me to classify the data into themes that address the variables of the study into a storyline. This proved valuable especially when I wanted to locate quickly the quotations and perspectives of the discussants on the variable of the study.

In doing the coding, I used themes as preset codes that carried with the themes under study that is, American dream, faith formation, mission of God, family way of worship, role of church schools in faith formation, among others. In using these codes I kept asking myself several questions such as: what does this response represent? Is this in the category of faith formation or mission of God or role played by the family? What are the answers that the discussants are offering pointing to? Are they pointing to how to handle the American dream or to faith formation? And so on.

I analyzed the data using three levels of coding. The first level of coding was line-by-line coding. Here I used what researchers call, *in vivo* coding.¹¹ *In Vivo* coding “refers to coding with a word or short phrase from the actual language found in the qualitative

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ See Appendix C.

data record.”¹² The reason why I used *in vivo* coding was to allow the voices of the respondents to be prioritized and honored.¹³

Next I did focused coding whereby I reviewed the *in vivo* codes analytically to see which ones made the most important aspects of my research. My purpose of doing this was to synthesize and conceptualize the whole data.

My last step in coding was what called Axial is coding. This involved reorganizing and reassembling the focused codes in order to identify the core practices of the studied congregation. By allowing the focused cords to coalesce I was able to move the ideas obtained to be sorted according to the themes of study. Since I had two focused groups, I combined the coded data which initially I had coded separately, in order to get one set of data without omitting the differences noted between responses of the two focused group.

Ethical Considerations

Since my study involved human subjects, it was important for me to observe the ethical considerations in the process of conducting the study so as to protect the dignity and privacy of the participant. I observed the ethical precautions stipulated in the IRB during the process of data collection, data transcription, data analysis, data interpretation and data reporting in an attempt to maintain maximum confidentiality and safety as well as wellbeing of the subjects involved in the research.

¹² “A Guide to Coding Qualitative Data,” *Salma Patel* (blog), September 18, 2014, <http://salmapatel.co.uk/academia/coding-qualitative-research>.

¹³ Kathy Charmaz, *Constructing Grounded Theory*, 2nd ed. (London: Sage, 2014), 134.

All focused group discussions were done with the permission of the participants who signed the Informed consent forms and returned them to the researcher according to the Institutional Review Board (IRB) Human Subjects Requirements of Luther Seminary.¹⁴ In line with this board's requirements the researcher observed the rule of not disclosing any of the names of the participants of the study or any other identifying clues as to their true identity by using codes whenever there was need of referring to the participants. The researcher initially made contact with the pastor of the congregation and presented to him the application letter, the IRB documents and informed consent forms. The church pastor of the congregation took these documents to the church board for discussion and approval. Once the study was approved, the researcher shared this documents with the participants of the study and this served the purpose and methodology of the study as they indicated the congregation and participants' willingness and permission to allow the researcher disclose the findings of the study to the public through electronic media, journals books and articles.

The data analysis and interpretation of this study further gave consideration to ethical principles by not disclosing the names or identifying markers of the participant's privacy, and using codes in lieu of actual identity markers that could easily identify the participants. It is only the researcher and the research advisor who had the privilege of accessing the audio taped focus group discussion and the transcribed data obtained from the field.

¹⁴ Luther Seminary Institutional Review Board (IRB) is a body that is charged with the responsibility of approving all research that involves human subjects conducted under the auspices of Luther Seminary by its faculty, staff or students.

By coding the transcribed data, the researcher was able to minimize the bias of associating the responses of the discussants with their personalities when writing the final report. The data obtained is kept in a safe locker in my room for a period of 3 years after the study process is completed and then it will be erased. For this case, the raw data will be destroyed by December 20, 2020 in accordance with the Federal guidelines which specify a minimum of 3 years for retention of data.

In this chapter I have discussed the Methodological framework that guided this the study. In the next chapter, I will discuss the findings of the study based on the research methodology and design discussed in this chapter.

CHAPTER 6:
MAKING SENSE OF LIVING THE AMERICAN DREAM: FAITH FORMATION
AND THE MISSIO DEI DILEMMA AMONG SEVENTH DAY ADVENTIST
AFRICAN AMERICAN IMMIGRANT FAMILIES

In the previous chapter, the researcher discussed the methodological framework this study followed in order to arrive at the results. Specifically the researcher described the approach used, the locale of the study, and the method of data collection, the sample, type of sampling used and the sampling procedures employed. Accordingly, I discussed the methods of data collection, the data analysis and the ethical considerations observed during the process of conducting this study.

In this chapter, I will discuss the findings of the study on the American dream, faith formation and the *Missio Dei* dilemma among the Seventh Day Adventist African American Immigrant families. In understanding these aspects of the study, I had a structured focus discussion guide that had three categories of discussion questions which corresponded to the three themes under study.

The first set of questions centered on the theme of American dream. The aim of these questions was to understand how the discussants understood the American dream, what constituted the American dream for them before coming to America, and how their definitions have changed over time as they have settled here in America. In this category also were questions that sought the discussant's view of the attainability of their concept

of American dream. Additionally, the role of the family towards the pursuit of the American dream and the American dream's impact on the family was discussed. Finally, in this category the role of faith in God in the pursuit of the American dream was interrogated.

The second category of discussion questions revolved around the theme of faith formation. Here, the views on the role of faith formation in Africa and in America was sought. I sought to understand ways in which the discussants as parents in Africa and here in America differed in terms of how they raise their children in the faith. Additionally, the challenges and activities around faith formation and how these challenges can be addressed were explored in this category. Finally, in this category, the role of school environment in nurturing faith of a child was discussed with specific opinions sought on the importance of educating children in Seventh Day Adventist church founded schools.

The third and last category of questions discussed revolved around the theme of the mission of God. Here the discussions sought to understand how the discussants share their faith with their children here in America and at the same time realize the American dream. And finally, how do parents become better witnesses for God wherever they are with their children.

As discussed in chapter 5, the data obtained from the group discussion was coded for analysis. 97 *in vivo*¹ codes emerged during analysis of the two focused group discussions. These *in vivo* codes were obtained from what the two focused groups had in

¹ See Appendix C.

common and which I combined to 16 focused codes. Out these focused codes I further combined those with similarities to form 9 axial codes in order to identify the core practices of the studied congregation. By allowing the focused cords to coalesce I was able to move the ideas obtained to be sorted according to the themes of study. Table 3 shows the focused group Axial and focus codes.

Table 3: Axial and Focused Group Codes of the Combined Focus Group Discussion

Focused codes	Axial codes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Quality education -Quality life -High quality Services -False media Creations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Sense of what “American dream” was before coming to America
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - An embodiment of opportunity -Requires hard work, discipline and persistence. -Guaranteed upward mobility through honest hard work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What America is - Needs a mental shift to accommodate realities of life. - Offers opportunity to rise in all spheres through hard work
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Prior education doesn’t matter - system if education different -Disguised employment - Too many bills -Double or even triple shifts working to earn a living - American dream is a mirage too good to be grasped - no time for worship - frustrated by children’s behavior 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Shattered dreams - A risk to health due to no rest - No time for family gatherings for worship - New work ethic - Children at risk of lacking developing holistically.

The axial codes that emerged on American dream can be summed up appropriately as an opportunity to rise to spheres of life through hard work, discipline and persistence. This opportunity needs a mental shift that accommodates the realities of life that has a different system of education, work ethic and employment and therefore exposing the family to a myriad of challenges such as too many bills, possibility of loss of family hour of worship, health related challenges due to taking two or three shifts at

work so as to manage bills. An even graver danger is the possibility of missing time to nurture the faith of your children.

Based on the axial codes therefore what we can understand about the African immigrant families is that in their pursuit of the American dream, they could adjust the expectation of their dreams to accommodate present realities of life in America and by emphasizing the spiritual development of their children may guarantee a better future for them.

At this point of the presentation of the findings of the study, my role will be that of a narrator and coordinator.² I will inhabit this role through paraphrasing sections of the data transcript or by directly quoting the exact words from the focus group discussants. The discussion will follow the three categories stated above whereby the specific questions in each category will be discussed.

The American Dream

The focus groups were asked to give a sense of what they thought constituted the American dream before they came to America. The discussions revolved around key words such as: good life, more money, high quality services, good education and high level of security. Here is what one of the discussants said:

I thought that everything is perfect in the sense that if I was to buy anything it must be of high quality. If it is a cloth, its quality should be good. If it is education, it must be of the highest quality. And if it is working, the work place should be the best place to work. And above all, if it is money, there is a lot of

² Larry VandeCreek, Hilary E. Bender, and Merle R. Jordan, *Research in Pastoral Care and Counseling: Quantitative and Qualitative Approaches* (Decatur, GA: Journal of Pastoral Care Publications, 1994), 111-12.

money in America as a country. In other words, the dream I had is that everything is perfect.

These assumptions were shaped by the mental pictures that were placed in their minds by the media, especially, television programs and Hollywood movies that portrayed America as a blissful country -- call it the type of Canaan portrayed in the Bible as a land that flows with milk and honey.³ The discussants were in agreement that indeed, the portrayal of America as the epitome of goodness by the media influenced their choices of immigrating to America. However, they were also quick to add that if the media had shown them the other side of America where people juggle between two jobs, where one has to work hard up his/her sweat only to end in bills, their skewed view of what America is and their dreams would have been different as captured by one of the discussants in this excerpt:

I think while I was in Kenya, my American dream was shaped with what I was seeing in the media and people who had been here before. Whenever they came back to Africa and the projects they did, gave us a good impression that there are good things here in America. They build good houses and some would come within a span of a year, and he is driving a car and given that, in Kenya not many people would afford to drive a car then- it appeared that whenever one came to America then, it would become very easy for him/ her to do some of the things which are hard to do back in Africa. And the images we used to see on TV about comfortable life in America, people living a good life, made us yearn for that life as well. And getting here I may not deny there are many opportunities compared to back in Africa. And you can be able to live a comfortable life. But the only thing we didn't know is that, there are also special challenges here. I know we thought that there will only be good American life had many challenges we would face. You know the working ethics here are little bit different from the ones in Kenya. The duration of time you spend at work is what you will be paid for. And then as for me, who came to America with young children, the American dream

³ "Exodus 33:3 Go up to the Land Flowing with Milk and Honey. But I Will Not Go with You, Because You Are a Stiff-Necked People and I Might Destroy You on the Way," accessed January 25, 2018, <http://biblehub.com/exodus/33-3.htm>.

became a nightmare! Children became disobedient and I found myself unable to control them. This sometimes became scary.

And yet to others, their dream of America as a land of plenty that dishes her goodies to her inhabitants, caused them travel to different places before finally arriving at their dream land. In their mind, the American dream entailed a land of plenty which promised higher returns compared to their motherland. Such thoughts of a better country led them to abandon their well-paying jobs with prospects of even a better country. Little did they know that their hopes would be quashed. Unlike the children of Israel, who when faced with tough times in the desert, would prefer to go back,⁴ some of the discussants literally went back to their countries of origin as articulated by one parent:

I had wanted to come to America. But I couldn't make it when I was young. I went to India and then came back to Kenya where I became a manager of one of the companies and life was good. We had tried to apply these lotteries for some time without success until finally my wife got one. All along we knew that life in America was good. Finally, when we reached here, I got to discover that things were not glossy as I thought, I went back to Kenya to continue with my work leaving my wife with the children.

This form of disappointment or mismatch between fantasies of what the American dream was before coming to America and the reality of what America is to this discussant, led me to my next question, "How has your view of the American dream changed over time since you arrived here? Surprisingly, all the discussants agreed that what they thought America to be is not what they got and for that matter their idea of the American dream

⁴ "Exodus 16:3 The Israelites Said to them, 'If Only We Had Died by the LORD's Hand in Egypt! There We Sat around Pots of Meat and Ate All the Food We Wanted, but You Have Brought Us out into This Desert to Starve This Entire Assembly to Death,'" accessed January 25, 2018, <http://biblehub.com/exodus/16-3.htm>.

had to change or even be reconfigured to accommodate the realities that they had not known before.

In this process, the discussants came to redefine the American dream as an embodiment of opportunities or a platform where every individual can attain anything that he/ she needs (such as good education, job opportunity, good medical attention, improved security, good housing, respect of human rights etc.) through hard work, persistence and discipline. This platform guarantees upward mobility for everyone regardless of his/ place of origin, creed, color or religious persuasion as captured by discussant B4 below:

It depends on the individual and what he wants to do. If you want to get a job here, it is not as hard to get it as compared to where we came from. Because here you don't have to make (a strict) choice. You can do any job and get money. And the money you get, you can use it to pay the bills and not just to wait to save enough money to realize your dream. The little money you get can help you change your life. Another thing, those who want to go school, actually can be able to go school in this country than in the country where we came from. So it depends from one individual to another and how one wants your life to be. From where we came, even when you don't work (if employed) you can get your salary at the end of the month. But in this place you have to get disciplined. If you don't go to work you won't be paid anything. There is no corruption here, though there is corruption in other areas, but not so rampantly like where we came from. Things here are transparent, in other words, you work, you get. Unlike in Africa where sometimes one can work and not get paid. Here, you are assured that you are going to get paid.

The discussant's view on looking at an American dream as a process of upward mobility resonates well with the thoughts of historian James Truslow Adams whom I mentioned in chapter one of this thesis who argued that the American dream entailed "a dream of a land in which life should be better and richer and fuller for every man, with

opportunity for each according to his ability or achievement."⁵ Indeed, this finding justified my proposition that I had made in chapter one that the dream is of an America as a nation providing equal opportunities that any person from any quarter of the world who steps into this country, possessing literally nothing except a valid dream, is able to rise to success economically, socially and otherwise to the pinnacle of society through his/her hard work and determination. Such upward economic, social and political mobility would then guarantee the individual enjoyment of freedoms of liberty and equality beyond what their parent countries provided.

As to whether the American dream is attainable or not, a minority of the discussants in focused group 1 (3 out of 8) were not shy to say that it is attainable only if the dreamer is willing to adjust his or her expectations to the realities that immerse in his or her pursuit of the American dream. The discussants' thoughts on this issue of attainability of the American dream are summarized in the words of discussant B1 and B6 as follows:

. . . if your dream was to have a very good house, you may have a house that doesn't perfectly fit the dreams you had, nevertheless you still have a house. If your dream was to drive a good car, you may be able to drive a car even when it may not have met the model of your expectation; nonetheless you are still driving. If you wanted to live a very comfortable life, you may not live perfectly comfortable life but still you are better off than when you were living in Africa. so it is half attainable

Discussant B6 had this to say:

When I arrived here, there are some dreams I had to adjust. Because what I knew before coming over here is different from what I got here. I thought that I will just get here and get a job and start earning just like that. When I arrived here I realized that my going to school didn't count. You have to go through a process to prove to them that you went to school and their system is different. I spent 5

⁵ Youngro Lee, To Dream Or Not To Dream, 16 Cornell Journal of Law and Public Policy 231, 232 <http://scholarship.law.cornell.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1107&context=cjlp>

years trying to study how to get to their system and eventually I did. But that is something that I didn't know before I came to America. I would say, if one is patient, one can achieve the dream but again you have to define your dream. Sometimes you have to adjust or make some adjustments to your dream. The reason why I say this is because there are things that we saw on TV about America which got into our heads such as I will get a big nice house, a good car, and maybe a boat. But you realize, well those things are there, but then, you can't afford them. The reason being sometimes the money you have may not be able to afford all those things. Overall, I would say, if one is patient over time, putting in hard work, I think it is achievable. You have to put hard work to get that that money

However, those with dissenting voices in the group concerning the attainability of the dream, as captured by discussant B2, were very categorical that the American dream is a mirage too good to be grasped. Their thoughts are premised on the fact that when one compares his/her life, back in Africa and what he/she goes through here in America, one is only left to cast a dark shadow on the attainability of the American dream. In my experience, their view may well represent a significant number of people who may not have the courage to voice their opinion confidently like discussant B2. Here is what he says:

For me, I have not attained my dream which I had from Kenya. The reason is, I wanted to have more money than what I have now (the group laughs). Back in Kenya I was also getting money and using it by the end of the month I still would find myself broke. When I have come to America, I expected things to change, but the same thing is happening. Coming to America now means am living from paycheck to paycheck. My job I was qualified doing in Kenya, am not doing it here now. Am forced to go back to school to do something else which can give me money. And so, am still struggling. I have not reached it (American dream) and as per now, I don't know whether I will ever attain it.

The reason why I included this question on the attainability of the American dream among the discussion questions was to get a glimpse on the motives of the discussants pursuing the American dream. Secondly, I wanted to get an understanding/

explanation or relationship between the urge to fulfil the American dream and the toll of such pursuit to attain it on the family as an institution.

My presupposition was that, the stronger the urge of pursuing the American dream (in case it is narrowly defined to mean, good life and money), the less the time the pursuant will dedicate to the family, and the less time the pursuant will allocate to faith formation practices in the home.

To test this presupposition, I brought in the question on the importance of the family in the pursuit of the American dream. The resultant discussion achieved the intended mission. The discussion unearthed the importance of the family as a basic unit and driving force that motivates African immigrants to seek ways to improve the state and the estate of their families both here in America and back in Africa. However others saw the family as an impediment to the attaining their American dreams.

Here are some of the responses:

C4: My family is very important. But what is my American dream when I came to America at this age? My dream was that my family, especially my wife and children may have all they need. We brought our children here so that they can have the American education and prosper. That was our dream me and my wife. Had it been that I had no children, there is no way I could have come to America. Because the job I had was enough to give me a good life and guaranteed me good retirement benefits which were ok. But since I knew the conditions in Kenya were not conducive with the change of governments, I said to myself, let me take my children to America so that I can realize the dreams of my children in America. My dream of seeing my children progressing and prospering is still what I am praying for. And I can say that the Lord is good. Despite ups and downs of this country, our children are sometimes doing things which are not good but still I can say we are together. We are still pursuing this American dream. And my dream is that my children achieve something. That was my dream when I was coming here. I did not come here to go school. I came here specifically for my children to go school and that is what I pray for my children every day every night. Soon and very soon I may realize that dream.

C3: I can say that the family is so important for everyone and this is so important because everyone wants to have a family. So sometimes when you are trying to

achieve the American dream with the family here in America, it will depend on the understanding that you have right with both your nuclear and the extended family back in Africa. Because back in Africa, they will want you to help them at your own expense.

C2: I will say personally, I came here by myself from Africa as a young adult. So it depends on how you set your family. They might help you attain your dream or they may not. When I got my first job, I felt the need to help my people back home. So I have been helping them until yesterday. Every day for all the years that I have stayed here I have helped them, not knowing that, if I could have stopped at some point and told them, hey, let me help myself first, and then I f I get better, and attain my dream and then I would be able to help you in a good way compared to how I have done. You find that some people, like myself, help our families too much to the extent of neglecting ourselves.

C6: well the family is important for every aspect. Just like any other business or organization where you have different cadres or employees, there must be coordination to achieve your dream. Whether you are in Africa or in the USA, if you do things together you will prosper. If you are going to school your wife may work to support you, or you may go for a loan as she uses her earnings to feed the family. Or if she is the one going to school, then you will make sure that the basic needs needed by the family are catered for. This happens everywhere. If one of you earns and spends elsewhere you may not realize your dreams. Even if you work and earn a lot of money and then you don't have a budget to operate with, you may not realize any dream that you had. So, again, like in any organization, cooperation leads to achieving goals and for that matter your American dream.

It can be said therefore that the family can support the realization of one's dreams or can ruin the prospects of fulfilling them, especially when family sees you as an automated machine that provides money and other resources to take care of all other family members.

By and large what this section of my study has revealed is that – at least here in Minnesota, and for the people with whom I worked -- African immigrants' stay in America may not be a gateway to better social and economic improvement. Though America provides a chance for the immigrants to work hard and long hours enough to guarantee upward social and economic mobility, there are many odds against them in

terms of faith formation of their children and ultimately pursuing the mission of God with zeal as compared with the experiences of those who remained in Africa.

Overall there are contrasting challenges between what the American dream looked like in the mind of the African immigrants before and after they settled here in America. Now that they have seen the reality of American dream, they have to translate their dreams into reality. They have to work hard and long hours to improve their lives and ensure a better future.

In order for their children to enjoy a quality education, parents have to intentionally invest in their education; in terms of freedom and justice African immigrants have to realize that both concepts require respect for individual choices as well as a strict observance of the law of the land. Let me now give a summary of similarities and differences from the two focused groups' responses on American Dream.

Similarities and Differences between Focus group A and B on American Dream

Both groups envisioned a good and lifestyle only if you invest your time in education and hard work. Focus group A still feels that their "American dream" is too hard to achieve since they look back with nostalgia about good times in Africa whereas Focus group B has less to look back to, they insist that the American dream is for them an opportunity to achieve through hard work and diligence. Both groups accept that the family has to support one another in all spheres in order to succeed as captured by discussant C6 referred above. Both groups agree that the family is a basic unit and driving force that motivates them to seek ways to improve the state and the estate of their families both here in America and way back in Africa. Both groups agree that the quality of education here in America is better compared to the one in Africa where they

immigrated from. (Focus group A speaks this out of experience, while Focus group B speaks about this point from what they read or hear about Africa).

Whereas Focus Group A feels that coming to America in pursuit of “American Dream” was a gamble, the focus group B sees America as a home since they have less experience of what it means to live outside America.

The next section presents results from a set of discussion questions which centered on the theme of faith formation.

Faith Formation

During the analysis of responses on this section, sixteen *in vivo* codes emerged.⁶ These were combined into 10 Focused codes, which were then combined into 5 axial codes. Table 5 below illustrated the connection between axial and focused codes.

Axial code	Focused code
Whole family involvement in devotion activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Setting timetable for devotion - Reading scripture, singing and praying together. -Spiritual nurture a communal affair in Africa
Balance between work and family worship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Taking shifts for work, one parent is with children at any particular time -Parents becoming responsible for the spiritual nurture of their kids.
Choice of schools for children	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Church owned and operated schools nurture faith -Public schools especially in America do not encourage God
Church programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Enriching church programs - training more teachers for children at church

⁶ See Appendix C.

Incorporating Children in church leadership roles	-Children going through adventurers clubs, Pathfinder's club and the youth Club
---	---

The axial codes refers to how faith can be formed and nurtured at home, at church and at school. The family is at the heart of spiritual formation through devotions done at home, reading of scriptures at home, singing and praying together. Balancing between work and family worship will ensure that children have at least one parent at home at any particular time who will not only oversee the devotions but also spiritual development among children when they are at home.

The first question in this section sought to determine how parents supported their families in Africa at the same time carrying out faith formation of their children and how different it is now.

The discussion yielded answers that revolved around practices like having a timetable for spiritual devotion which included assigning family members responsibilities of conducting a devotion program. By devotion program I mean the family members gathered around the table where one of the assigned members would begin with a prayer, followed by singing of spiritual hymns and reading of scriptures. The leader would then lead the rest of the family members through a bible discussion which culminated in each family member giving lessons learned from the discussions including the children.

The greatest challenge in this activity of conducting morning and evening devotions is that at times parents leave home at different times to go work and at times in the morning you find that the time is not enough to prepare children for school and at the same time carry out the devotion. Many times the parents have to skip this ritual because they have to get the child to school before they run to work. These thoughts are captured by one of the discussants, D1 and D4 as follows:

D1: I had a timetable for devotions involving the participation of every member of the family. I would lead as the father, followed by my wife and then children, each taking turns and the program involved reading and elaborating scripture verse, followed by singing a song and then prayers. This was a routine schedule and that is how we managed to progress in reading the word of God.

D4: We have devotions in the evenings but in the morning, they (children) get up early for school. We don't have time to meet. Even way back in Africa, for my family it was not easy for us to meet but in the evening, it was almost the norm. So in the evenings even when one of us is not there, those who may be present will do the devotions.

These rituals according to the discussants did not stop once they came to America.

They keep on doing these rituals with their family members though not with the consistency and elaborate procedures as they used to do them while in Africa.

Besides daily devotions, which were done in mornings and evenings before everyone goes to sleep, the discussants mentioned youth clubs such as Adventurers club, Pathfinders club⁷ and youth groups. In the Seventh Day Adventist church, children's ministries department have functional clubs which help in building the faith of the children. These clubs operate somewhat similarly to Scouts' clubs. The major difference between them and Scouts' clubs is that they have a spiritual component which takes the central place in their curriculum.

⁷ The Pathfinder club is a group of young boys and girls within the SDA church. According to <http://www.pathfindersonline.org/about-pathfinders/about>, Pathfinders are a worldwide organization of young people sponsored by the Seventh-day Adventist Church, though young people of any religious persuasion, or none at all, are welcome and encouraged to join the organization. Pathfinders offer a wide range of activities including, but not limited to: Camping & camping/survival skills, Grade appropriate leadership training, Activities promoting community pride & involvement through outreach activities such as helping in downtown soup kitchens, collecting food for the disadvantaged, cleaning & maintaining city and county parks, visiting and encouraging the elderly, and MANY more; Interactive training in a variety of recreational, artistic, nature, conservation, vocational, and outreach areas, with awards (honors) given for successful completion of the interactive training modules and Personal care and encouragement by a caring staff member!

In fact, “The mission of the Adventurer Club ministry is to serve an intercultural community of children from pre-kindergarten through fourth grade and their parents or guardians and assist Adventurer families in growing as followers of Jesus.”⁸ The Pathfinder or better known as Pathfindering on the other hand, “Conjures up images of marching, camping, curious hobbies, bugs and bats. Enlarging their windows on the world and building a relationship with God are the dual objectives of this club, which is designed for children ages 10-15.”⁹

Although the discussants applauded the Pathfinders’ and Adventurer clubs for their noble cause of educating and shaping the young people’s faith, they noted with concern that their children sometimes are affected by the developmental stages such as when they reach the adolescence and question the authority of parents by becoming rebellious. I count the rebellious nature of the children at this stage as a very normal thing. Although it also seemed to me that most parents were not prepared to respond to these developmental changes in their children as captured by discussant **D3**:

Even when they have gone through those clubs, when they come to adolescent stage, I can frankly say that I can see them trying to waiver. But as a parent we try as much as we can to bring them closer. And sometimes this stage is very bad. You find a child all over a sudden changing, so sometimes we really talk to them. I can say, sometimes my wife cries and she tells them that you know how we have struggled bringing you up. And given that now they have grown up, they can answer you in a manner that suggests to you that “you know I have grown up?”

⁸ “About Us - Adventurer Club,” accessed January 29, 2018, <https://www.adventurer-club.org/about-us>. The Adventurer club operates on the understanding that children between grades 1-4 do not want to sit idle for long and therefore to utilize their energy you have to engage them in activities and games that improve their coordination skills. The club’s mission and philosophy utilizes the knowledge obtained from developmental psychology.

⁹ “Pathfinders,” accessed January 29, 2018, <http://youth.adventist.org/Ministries/Pathfinders>.

but even then as a parent, you continue to talk to them and tell them even if you have grown, you are still my son. So we have challenges as they reach that stage.

On the part of balancing between work and faith formation while in Africa, which was part of the question that I posed for discussion, the respondents agreed that the sense of community that exists in Africa contributed so much to the nurturing of the faith of young ones. They noted that way back in Africa, a child belongs to the community:

D2: I think in Africa, it was easy because it was a communal affair. Nurturing faith was a community affair. As the children were born, they were born into the church, grew in the church. It was so easy since there were more programs and activities for children especially on a Sabbath, I would say, there in Africa, it was not a problem because the church was part of a community we lived in

Therefore members of the community had to make sure that all children regardless of who their parents are, provided they belong to the same denomination should be at church on any particular Saturday or Sunday. In this respect, you would find that if a parent is not able to attend church service for any other reason, the neighbors would be requested to go along with the children to church and ensure that they stick and learn at church, and then bring them back home. This responsibility many times was done by mothers. In her article *Journey of Faith: African Girls and Religious Life*, Jane Wakahiu notes that

It was typical that the role a woman played was that of an educator, transmitting knowledge and morals and introducing her children to the norms of the community. As a mother, her role was fundamental for the biological, physical, psychological, moral, social, and religious maturation of her children.¹⁰

¹⁰ Jane Wakahiu, "Journey of Faith: African Girls and Religious Life," Global Sisters Report, 3:13pm, <http://globalsistersreport.org/column/trends/journey-faith-african-girls-and-religious-life-31346>.

Besides that, the focused discussion group argued that schools in Africa had and still have compulsory religious education as a subject of study:

So in terms of religion as others have said, the schools in America do not mind about that. It is the function of a parent, who is supposed to teach your children about God. Public Schools in America they don't teach religion. Unless private schools such as SDA schools I don't know anything about them. But for the public schools in America do not want to hear about religion. It is not like in Africa where I came from where I learnt about religion and God in subjects such as Christian Religious Education (CRE) where I knew who God was and while in secondary school though it wasn't a seventh day Adventist school, they used to worship on a Saturday. So on a Saturday, you wake up you go and take breakfast and go to church and if you don't go to church, you will be whipped or you will be punished in whatever way. So we were forced to attend. I think that was a way for us as young children to know God. But here in America, it is the responsibility of a parent entirely to teach religious values (Discussant E3).

The teaching of Religious studies as an examinable subject is for both public and private schools especially in East Africa where majority of the respondents (87.5%) came from. The curriculum in East Africa¹¹ in most schools is set such that the Christian religious education (for those from Christian families) or the Islamic Religious studies (For those from Muslim families) are part of the examinable subjects. So if the child that doesn't get to study about the Bible and God at home, he or she cannot avoid getting to learn about God and His mission. In sharp contrast, American schools do not have that part of religious studies as a compulsory component of study for every child at the elementary and high school level.

The next question therefore I had to ask the discussants was: Is the school environment supporting the growth of your children's faith that you are trying to nurture

¹¹ "THE CHRISTIAN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION SYLLABI FOR SECONDARY SCHOOLS: AN ADVENTIST ASSESSMENT AND A PROPOSAL," accessed March 9, 2018, http://christinthe classroom.org/vol_23/23cc_103-118.htm.

at home and are there specific faith related challenges that the children are getting in the schools where they are studying? The responses were heart breaking. To the discussants, the public schools seemed to undo all the efforts they put toward faith formation. As captured by the response of discussant E1:

I would say obviously say that the environment they are studying do contribute to their spiritual growth. Unfortunately, the environment we are in I can call it “anti-Christian - because they don’t encourage spiritual growth because even in the schools that they are they have banned the use of the bibles in school or talking about God. It becomes very hard for children when we train them and encourage them to trust and believe in God but in school, they are kind of discouraged though they don’t do it openly.

Though the discussant called the environment in schools as “Anti-Christian,” I think the right word he could have used is “Post-Christian.” That word is best defined as “a culture that was once shaped by the Christian faith and worldview, but has since moved away from the primacy of such a worldview.”¹²

Apart from the post-Christian culture found in schools, the discussants noted that influence of friends and peers who may not be coming from Christian homes, the effect of electronic devices, social media still pass a great challenge to them when it comes to faith formation as expressed by discussant E1:

So it becomes a kind of challenge as one of the parents was saying, it is a little easy when the children are younger to train them but as they grow up as young adults or teenagers, it becomes a little bit of a challenge because they now have friends who are not from church set up or families and the things that they talk about and all these electronic devices that they have, they really get distracted from the way I want to bring them up.

¹² Josh Baylor, “What Is Post-Christian Culture, and Am I Living in One?,” *International Mission Board* (blog), March 10, 2017, <https://www.imb.org/2017/03/10/post-christian-culture-living-one/>.

Another challenge cited by the discussants in relation to schools which, according to them, should be continuing places for nurturing faith for their children like in Africa is that of drugs. Discussant E2 had this to say,

What I have to say, is that this country has got a lot of challenges. You go to those buildings, you see them looking very decent, very clean; have everything that is needed for school and you think that everything is clean in that place. There are certain things that are done in this schools, in fact there are some schools which are very specifically known for drugs. So you may not really know that children even in the elementary, junior high school or high school have begun doing drugs. In this country, drugs in schools are very prevalent.

Although discussant E2 did not clearly explain the link between drugs in schools and faith formation, a study funded by The Annie E. Casey Foundation, a private charitable organization dedicated to helping build better futures for vulnerable children and families in the United States, published in *Faith Matters*¹³ reveals that religion is very important component in establishing the moral order of people. The specific aspects mentioned are:

1. Establishing specific moral directives or rules of self-control and personal virtue, such as abstaining from the use of alcohol, tobacco and illegal drugs,
2. Facilitating spiritual experiences that help solidify moral commitments and constructive life practices (e.g., answered prayers) and
3. Providing role models that, for example, abstain from drug use or have overcome addiction.¹⁴

¹³ “Faith Matters3.Pdf,” accessed January 29, 2018, <https://www.ok.gov/odmhsas/documents/faith%20matters3.pdf>.

¹⁴ “Faith Matters3.Pdf.”

Comparison between Focus group A and Focus Group B on Faith formation

Focus group A expressed longing for the African way of bringing up children in the faith whereby any member of the society would ensure that children are able to go to church whether their parents are willing to go to church or not. To them (Focus group A) church and community were one in bringing up children. The society valued moral values and any adult would correct a child in the wrong without fear of reprisal from the parents' child. Focus group B could not be able to relate this communal responsibility even when the church does provide a platform for communal engagement, by and large the American way of life to a large extent rests moral up-bringing of children entirely on the parent and that is true to a certain age when this child cannot make a decision of his or her.

Focus group A reminisced of African schools where national curriculum included compulsory teaching of Christian Religious studies both in private and public schools. In contrast religious studies is not a compulsory subject at all in schools where Focus group B parents teach their children here in America.

Focus group A remembers a time when the whole family gathered around fire places to tell Christian stories as they shared their day to day experiences; where parents would not hurry for second shift for work. For group B, their experiences are colored with post Christian challenges of American culture.

Addressing Faith Formation Challenges

Cognizant of the challenges of the faith formation in public schools in America, the next question I asked the discussants was how to address these challenges. One way

of addressing the challenges suggested by the group was that a parent must always know the whereabouts of his child especially after they have come out of school and the type of friends that your child associates with. The discussants were aware of the biblical concept found in the book of Proverbs, “Walk with the wise and become wise for a companion of fools suffers harm,”¹⁵ as expressed by the views of E2:

One thing that we have to know is, who is a friend to your child? Who is with your child? When you hear that “I am with friends,” try to know who are those friends? And you know, they have friends whom they can try to shield you from them by telling you don’t want me to socialize with my friends? “I am with my friends. You know, this is very common and whenever you hear that I am with my friends, try to be very careful find out who are those friends. So in such situation drugs are very prevalent and I have seen such things happen here. And if we don’t check that out properly, our children will go astray. Even right here in the church, some of these children come with those drugs right into this church. I am telling you this because this is an experience I have witnessed.

Another parent had this suggestion regarding the role of parents in instilling the discipline of the child which is part of faith formation as follows:

So if you don’t work hard with your kid and also talk with the teachers your child may suffer both spiritually and discipline wise. The teachers are good in this country, if your kid is not doing well, they gonna call you. But if you don’t answer back two or three times, they will not call you. Every time your kid misbehaves the teachers will refer that kid to the deputy principal. The deputy principal will sit with the child and do the homework and your child will come back home because you as a parent you are not assisting them. So religion or knowing God and discipline have been left for the parents. So that is our job we need to do. If we will not do it, nobody is going to do it for us (E3).

¹⁵ “Bible Gateway Passage: Proverbs 13:20 - New International Version,” Bible Gateway, accessed January 29, 2018, <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Proverbs+13%3A20&version=NIV>.

What comes out clearly here is that it takes more than a parent to form the faith of a child. Like a chain, if one part does not interlock properly, then the chain can no longer serve its intended purpose.

Another parent suggested that it is the responsibility of the parent to educate himself or herself about the developmental milestones that children go through by reading books or attending seminars that teach parents how to parent teenagers so that when these teenagers reach a point where their mind starts to question the beliefs they once held to, they can be able to answer them honestly and candidly as E1 puts it:

What I have observed, and which I think is normal, is that at times when the children go to adolescence, they get less interested in spiritual things and they kind of get a little disinterested. It takes a little bit of effort and sometimes you feel like you are losing control and you can't control them easily. But as a parent that is our role and that we should understand that they are growing and that they go through those stages and these are some of the challenges of parenting. One of the things I did was, when my children started getting to adolescence stage, I took some time to read books about what happens when children grow? And it is enlightening to know that it is not that particular child but generally with all children as they grow through different stages of life, their thinking capacity changes, and their perception changes and sometimes they question things they have been accepting easily.

Another parent felt that there needs to be a collaboration between the parents and the church in training bible based teachers who in return can be able to understand the needs of the church as well the needs of the parents in nurturing the faith of the children. Such teachers, needless to say, should have to be trained in what the Seventh day Adventist philosophy of education is, embrace it and then be willing to implement it. It is only then that a firm foundation can be created both in schools and the church that will ensure that the children's faith is nurtured properly as expressed by this excerpt from the discussion:

G4: strengthening programs for the young and the children in the church is very important even the bible teaches us to teach the children when they are young enough to learn even when they become adults they may not be able to depart from it. I think one of the challenges that we have had is personnel. Training teachers who have knowledge of children's programs requires us as a church to train them. We have been in situations as a church where even getting volunteers or even parents to come in and help with the programs but even if we have programs and we don't have people to run those programs, then that is not good.

In summary, the discussants agreed that faith formation requires that parents become intentional in developing the faith of their children in the home, at church, in the community and in schools. This can be done by having morning and evening devotions at home involving all family members, strengthening the African sense of community and taking children to participate in both Pathfinders and Adventurer clubs.

The next set of questions were geared towards capturing the views on the third last theme of the study that is, the mission of God.

The Mission of God

As noted in chapter one, one of the important commands found in the Bible (common to both Judaism and Christianity) is what is recorded in the book of Deuteronomy urging parents to be instruments of the *missio Dei*. This great command requires that parents are by extension to take a lead role in advancing the mission of God through instructing/ teaching their children as seen in this verse:

And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be upon thy heart; and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thy house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thy hand, and they shall be for frontlets between thine eyes. And thou shalt write them upon the door-posts of thy house, and upon thy gates.¹⁶

¹⁶ "Deuteronomy 6 ASV," accessed January 30, 2018, <http://biblehub.com/asv/deuteronomy/6.htm>.

During the analysis of responses on this section, twenty seven in vivo codes immersed. These were combined into fourteen Focused codes, which were then combined into four axial codes. Table 4 below illustrates the connection between the axial and focused codes

Table 4: Mission of God Axial and Focus Codes

Axial Codes	Focused codes
Parental role	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Become role models in living the mission - Create conducive home environment for mission. -Attend parenting classes to learn about raising kids for mission
Church based spiritual programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Strengthen Pathfinder and Adventurer's clubs -developing age appropriate activities in the church - Bible competitions like Bible ball Encourage use of bibles and commentaries -Training children leaders how to nurture advance mission of God among children - Bible Based campouts
Facilitate formation and empowerment of children to be leaders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Giving children leadership roles such as preaching. - Exercise shared leadership with the children - Encouraging volunteers in the children department.

Table 4 illustrates the link between the axial and focused codes. The first Axial code points to the role of a parent and the environment at home. There are three major themes that emerge here: The personality traits and personal characteristics of a parent who understands the mission of God can encourage the development of mission oriented

children at home; the environment parents create at home and the need to further their knowledge on how to make disciples right at their homes through attending parenting classes.

The second axial code points to spiritual programs in the church. There is a need to revamp church programs to fit the changing times within the Faith church. Such a move calls for programs such as Pathfinders, Bible ball and other age appropriate activities which promote mission to be energized. More training for leaders of children is needed to appraise them on better ways of retaining and handling children at church to embrace them with the beauty of the mission of God.

The third axial code points to leadership aspects which in turn point to the need to involve the young generation (Children) to take on roles such as being church elders, preaching, encouraging volunteers to participate in children ministries which will enable them to learn how mission is done from the leaders of the church. The focus group discussants agreed that if the young people are accorded the opportunity to learn from their elders by being involved in the ministry, they can be better able to model the leadership styles that they witness in their elders. However, as discussant H4 said, “In the spiritual realm, we are like vessels, who pass knowledge to those who don’t have. If you don’t have knowledge to pass, if you are not spiritual, what are you going to pass over to your children? You can’t pass on what you don’t have.”¹⁷

¹⁷ Discussant H4.

The Role of Adventist Schools in the Mission of God

One of the ways the Seventh Day Adventist church obeys this command is through her education system and so I asked the focused group discussion a question: How important is it for you for your child to attend the Seventh Day Adventist Schools?¹⁸

The parents emphasized that church schools are very important to them because they not only impart knowledge to the children but they teach holistically to include family values. Here is an excerpt from one of the discussants (F1):

I would say that church schools are very important and that it is our responsibility given to us by God to teach our children. It helps to educate your child in this schools. Why do I say that? Because it is God who is taught there and that is where the difference is with public schools in America where nothing that touches God is taught there. Another thing that is taught in Adventist schools is family values. And you know how family values are very important. Once you are taught family values when you are young, you will never forget them. And I would say, SDA schools is the only way to go.

What actually the discussant is saying here is that the Seventh Day Adventist schools emphasize the teachings about God and other family values which ordinarily cannot be found in the public schools. These church schools are established and run based on the Seventh Day Adventist understanding of the philosophy of education. This philosophy of education is based on the assumption that the ultimate goal of education is the restoration of the lost image of God in mankind. These philosophy is captured in the following quotation:

The Seventh-day Adventist Church recognizes God as the ultimate source of existence, truth, and power. In the beginning God created in His image a perfect humanity, a perfection later marred by sin. Education in its broadest sense is a means of returning human beings to their original relationship with God. The

¹⁸ Seventh Day Adventist schools are schools run and operated by the Seventh Day Adventist Church and they follow the Seventh Day Adventist Philosophy of Education.

distinctive characteristics of this Adventist worldview, built around creation, the fall, redemption, and re-creation, are derived from the Bible and the inspired writings of Ellen G. White. The aim of true education is to restore human beings into the image of God as revealed by the life of Jesus Christ. Only through the guidance of the Holy Spirit can this be accomplished. An education of this kind imparts far more than academic knowledge. It fosters a balanced development of the whole person—spiritual, physical, intellectual, and social-emotional—a process that spans a lifetime. Working together, homes, schools, and churches cooperate with divine agencies to prepare learners to be good citizens in this world and for eternity.¹⁹

What this means is that if the parents want their children to participate in the mission of God, they should fully embrace the Seventh day Adventist education philosophy of education by ensuring that their children study in those schools so that they become firmly rooted and grounded in the mission of God. However, as one member noted, as much as parents would love to educate their children in Adventist schools, the cost of doing that is still high. The tuition charges in our SDA schools by and large remain too high for most of the African immigrants here in America and therefore, they may still meet the challenge of getting their children enrolling in these schools.

Parents as Role Models in the Mission of God

Apart from educating their children in the SDA schools, I sought to understand the role of the parents' spirituality and its impact on the mission of God among their children. I asked them a question: How important is our own spirituality in forming the faith of the young and how does it impact in return the faith formation of the children?

The response was as follows:

H:1 Let me say that it is the nature of children to copy what parents do. When they realize that the parents are not doing the wrong or right things they tend to

¹⁹ "Adventist Education," accessed January 30, 2018, http://adventisteducation.org/about/adventist_education/overview.

imitate them. In other words, if they realize that parents are not serious on what they are doing, especially in the church, there is a high percentage that they will imitate them. So it is very important that the parents behave well to be good role models for children to imitate.

The idea that comes out clearly here is that children are motivated if their parents live the talk. The parents felt strongly that being a role model to your children in terms of faith and practice is more powerful than when you try to tell them to do or live to certain standards or ideals which you yourself do not live by. To emphasize this point, some of the parents had this to say:

H2: A parent has a big influence on the children. Let me tell you that at times I can hear my boys imitating me on what I do. There is a time I wanted at least to leave the choir and at least relax since am in the choir with all my children. I stopped for some days, and you know all of them stopped attending except one. And when I went back all of them came back and we can sing with them. So you are the role model of your children. Sometimes when I do something wrong, there is one who quotes me, “dad why did you do this and that?” why are you asking me not to do it?

H4: In the spiritual realm, we are like vessels, who pass knowledge to those who don’t have. If you don’t have knowledge to pass, if you are not spiritual, what are you going to pass over to your children? You can’t pass on what you don’t have.

The thoughts of these parents echo the words of Jesus on the sermon on the mountain when He said,

You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.²⁰

²⁰ “Bible Gateway Passage: Matthew 5 - New International Version,” Bible Gateway, accessed January 30, 2018, <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew+5&version=NIV>.

It is important to note that the parents felt that if the mission of God has to progress beyond their generation, they need to begin earlier mentoring their children to take up leadership roles that they are holding now.

G3: we need to allow our young people take leadership roles such as office of an Elder of the church, and not make them offices for only the elderly. Some of us we have been elders of the church for so many years and we have been not allowing those young people to take over these offices so that they can learn from us how to be leaders of the church for tomorrow. But if you don't elect them to such offices, the church will reach a point where it has no elders and it will get stuck

By and large this chapter has presented and discussed the findings of the study. The chapter has revolved around the themes of mission of God, faith formation and the American dream and how the parents perceive them. The next chapter gives a summary of the whole study, conclusions and the recommendations.

CHAPTER 7

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

The intent of this study was to seek to answer the question: Can African immigrant families involve themselves in the faith formation of their children as they participate in the mission of God at the same time as they pursue their American dream? In an attempt to answer this question, I conducted an exploratory study where I employed focus group discussion as method of data collection. The respondents were purposively selected among the church members of Faith International SDA church.

The two Focused Groups sampled contained 8 parents each. Focus group A consisted of families who had children born and reared in Africa and came to America at the age of 12 and above. From this group I obtained information on faith nurturing practices and roles that the family of origin played in ensuring that there is the continuity of the mission of God among their children long after they had left their hands. Focus group 2 included young parents who came to America with their parents from Africa when they were young but now they are parents to children born in America. The purpose of this second group was to help me compare and contrast the experiences of faith formation and that of those parents who nurtured their children's spirituality while in Africa. I reviewed different types of literature of literature on American dream, faith formation and the mission of God among African immigrant families.

The findings of the study revealed that African immigrants to America have not fully attained their American dream though they have not lost their hope of pursuing it. In this pursuit, they face myriad challenges in regard to forming the faith of their children as well as pursuing the American dream such as they cannot afford to sit at home and spend quality time with their children. They are able to school their children in the Seventh day Adventist schools whose philosophy they feel, embraces the mission of God, because of high costs of education. To the parents, educating their children in SDA schools could guarantee continuity in faith formation practices. Some parents expressed lack of proper knowledge on parenting teenagers. Other challenges include the non-existence of community spirit in bringing up children akin to that found in Africa where a child belongs to the community and lack of competent teachers in the church to nurture children through the existing faith nurturing programs such as Pathfinders and Adventurer clubs.

Conclusion

Can African immigrant families involve themselves in faith formation of their children as they participate in the mission of God at the same time pursue their American dream? The answer from the study is that it is incredibly hard to pursue the American dream for African immigrants and to educate their children in faith in the strictest sense of what the Bible demands in Deuteronomy 6:4-6 in their present circumstances. The many contradictions between the American dream and the mission Dei discussed in this report points to one ending: Couldn't it be time that African Immigrants let go of the American dream and go back to Africa or concentrate more in the nurturing of faith of their children and mission of God by adjusting their dreams? To those who may feel the

need to keep pursuing the American dream at the expense of the Mission of God, isn't it time that such families become intentional in developing the faith of their children in the home, at church, in the community and in private denominational based schools? And what about pursuing the American dream? Jesus' words in the last part of Matthew 23:23 finds application here, "you ought to have done, without neglecting the others."¹

Recommendations

This study illustrates the role families and the church have on faith formation and the mission of God in a society that appears to be Post Christian. Since this study was just exploratory in nature, I recommend a similar study to be done perhaps an action-oriented study that will find a deeper solution to faith formation of children in homes, community and schools.

The scope of this study was limited to a small number of focused groups. I recommend that another study be carried out which widens the scope perhaps to include many churches and stake holders to get more concrete answers to the problems and challenges of faith formation and missio Dei. This will ensure that the data which was used in this study will be expanded and validated.

This study narrowed the research parameters to Seventh Day Adventist faith formation perspective. A wider study which incorporates other denominations will enrich the field of faith formation and Missio Dei as well as the American Dream.

¹ KJV.

APPENDIX A

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

LIVING THE AMERICAN DREAM: FAITH FORMATION AND THE MISSIO DEI DILEMMA AMONG SEVENTH DAY ADVENTIST AFRICAN AMERICAN IMMIGRANT FAMILIES

You are invited to be in a research study that seeks to understand the faith practices that parents engage in an attempt to form the faith of their children as they obey the great commission of making disciples. You were selected as a possible participant because you are a parent with a child/or had a child in this church. We ask that you read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

This study is being conducted by me as part of my master's thesis project in Pastoral Theology and Ministry at Luther Seminary. My advisor is Professor Mary Hess.

Background Information:

The purpose of this study is explore the challenges facing African immigrant families as they seek to nurture and transmit faith to their children as they pursue the American Dream.

Procedures:

If you agree to be in this study, we would ask you to do the following things. I would like to interview you together with other adult parents from your church where I will ask a series of questions about you and your family involvement in faith activities in the home. I will be able to record your responses so as to assist me to better understand the information that you will share with me. My estimate is that this interview will take us an hour to do. Your participation in this excise will not be accompanied by any monetary compensation but I request you to do it knowing that you are helping me to understand how faith formation practices among the African American immigrant families is conducted.

Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study:

This study involves very little risk. The only possibility might be that you would feel a strong emotion in relation to the stories you share in the interview. If at any time you feel discomfort, or indeed for any other reason, you may simply end your participation in the study at that point.

There is no direct benefit of participating in this research. Indirect benefits of participation are that you will have an opportunity to listen and share experiences how to nurture your child's faith with other parents at the same time become part of the solution to the challenges the church has in nurturing the faith of the young people. Secondly, by your participation you will contribute to improved programs or policies in our church and the nation as well as giving a contribution to knowledge on child faith formation.

Confidentiality:

The records of this study will be kept confidential. If I publish any type of report, I will not include any information that will make it possible to identify you. All data will be kept in a locked file in my room; only my advisor, Professor Mary Hess, and I will have access to the data and, if applicable, any tape recording. If the research is terminated for any reason, all data and recordings will be destroyed. While I will make every effort to ensure confidentiality, anonymity cannot be guaranteed due to the small number to be studied.

The tape recordings made will only be accessed by my advisor, Professor Mary Hess, and they will be used for educational purposes only. They will be erased 3 years after the study process is complete
a. Raw data will be destroyed by December 20, 2020. (Federal guidelines specify a minimum of 3 years for retention of data

b. Raw data will be retained but all identifying information removed by December 20th 2017.

Voluntary Nature of the Study:

Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Luther Seminary and/or with other cooperating institutions, Seventh Day Adventist Faith International Church. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

Contacts and Questions:

The researcher conducting this study is Enock Ariga Marindi. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you may contact me/us at emarindi001@luthersem.edu Phone: +1-651-442-2080.

Prof. Mary Hess at mhess@luthersem.edu Phone: 651-641-3232

You will be given a copy of this form to keep for your records.

Statement of Consent:

I have read the above information or have had it read to me. I have received answers to questions asked. I consent to participate in the study.

Signature _____ Date _____

Signature of investigator _____ Date _____

I consent to be audiotaped:

Signature _____ Date _____

I consent to allow use of my direct quotations in the published thesis document.

Signature _____ Date _____

APPENDIX B

FOCUSED DISCUSSION GUIDE

AMERICAN DREAM

1. Can you give me some sense of what you think constitutes the American dream? In other words, if you were to say “here is the American dream,” what would it be?
2. Before you came to America, you had a sense of what the American dream is. What was it like?
3. How has your view of the American dream changed over time since you arrived here?
4. Is the American dream attainable? Explain.
5. How important is attaining the American dream to you? Explain.
6. How important is your family in the pursuit of your American dream? Explain.
7. Is your pursuit of the American dream having any impact on your family?
8. Is faith in God important in your pursuit of American dream? Explain.

FAITH FORMATION

9. Was God part of faith formation while you were in Africa? If the answer is yes, how?
10. (a) How did you manage as parents to support your families at the same time carry out faith formation of your children while in Africa?
(b) How different is it now?
11. (a) What are the ways in which you shared your faith with members of your immediate family while in Africa?
(b) How different is it now?
12. What activities were useful in faith formation in Africa?
13. What activities are useful in faith formation here in America?
14. What are the challenges you are experiencing in nurturing faith among your children currently?
15. How can we address the challenges in faith formation listed above?
16. How important is it for your child to attend the Seventh Day Adventist School?

THE MISSION OF GOD

17. We often say in our church that God has called us to be witnesses. Do you agree?
(b) How did that unfold while in Africa before you got here in America?
(c) How different is this with how we witness about God now here in America? What ideas do you have on ways we can share our faith with our children and at the same time realize the American dream?

APPENDIX C

IN VIVO CODES

American Dream

1. Everything is perfect
2. The work place is the best place
3. there is a lot of money in America
4. Are many opportunities here compared to back in Africa
5. Working ethics here are little bit different here than in Kenya.
6. America dream is nightmare
7. Disappointed because of unfulfilled dreams
8. American dream achievable through education
9. Kids behavior change
10. Disguised employments
11. American dream was shaped with what I was seeing in the media
12. Ability to build good houses back home
13. Equitable salary, prompt payment of salary
14. Many opportunities here compared to back in Africa
15. Attainability of American dream
16. Coming to America am living paycheck to paycheck.
17. American dream may take you too long to attain it.
18. You may not live perfectly comfortable life but still you are better off than when you were living in Africa.
19. Opportunities for schooling and employment
20. System of government and laws are enabling
21. Going to school doesn't count

Family and American dream

1. Families don't live the way we expected them to live
2. Differences in timing as relating to work affect family time
3. when it is time you as a husband you are going to work, that is the time when your wife is coming home
4. So many families are breaking because the system here
5. Respect versus rights?
6. Money tearing families
7. Driven to help extended family versus nuclear family
8. seeing my children progressing and prospering is still what I am praying for
9. Plan how to take care of the children. We have to take shifts.
10. Difficult to communicate with my wife
11. In Africa where bringing a child is a communal event
12. Reason for coming to America is to secure children's future

Faith Formation

1. A timetable for devotions
2. The participation of every member of the family
3. Involved reading and elaborating scripture verse
4. by Singing a song and prayers
5. The schedules for work differ,
6. Easy because it was a communal affair. It was a community
7. Were more programs and activities for children especially on a Sabbath
8. Children themselves can lead in the devotion.
9. Children going through adventurers clubs, Pathfinder's club and the youth Club
10. Disappointed by changes especially adolescence
11. Parents responsible for upbringing
12. The schools they don't encourage spiritual growth
13. Training young ones when they are young enough
14. Public Schools in America they don't teach religion.
15. Frustrated parent for noncompliance of kids in the ways of the Lord
16. Drug menace

The Mission of God

1. African curriculum incorporates religious studies in the curriculum
2. Church schools had compulsory worship services in Africa
3. No religion in American schools, discipline and spirituality suffer as a result
4. Religion or knowing God and discipline have been left for the parents in America
5. Church schools are instrumental in advancing the mission of God
6. Create age appropriate activities that can keep them in the church.
7. Activities such as bible study, playing games in the church etc. activities that will nurture them within the church setup
8. Social activities within the precincts of the church and when they interact with each other they educate each other as Christians.
9. Pathfinders club and adventurer's club
10. Bible competitions like bible ball
11. nurture these children to get used to bible readings, and bible commentaries
12. church responsibility to nurture young ones
13. Bible campouts
14. Need to strengthen the children ministries in our church
15. Giving children an opportunity to learn to take responsibilities such as preaching and the elders of the church can listen,
16. Opportunity for children to take leadership roles in the church
17. Strengthening programs for the young and the children in the church
18. Training teachers who have knowledge of children's programs
19. Getting volunteers or even parents to come in and help with the programs

- 20. Parenting class
- 21. Home environment affect spiritually and conduct of children in the church
- 22. Parents as role models in living the mission of God.
- 23. Influence of peers and friends, watch out
- 24. Help children as they transition from one stage to another not to abandon faith
- 25. Equip parents with parenting tips to avoid frustrating children during developmental changes
- 26. Parents are not serious on what they are doing, especially in the church, there is a high percentage that they will imitate them.
- 27. Parent to educate yourself how on the knowledge of God
- 28. If you are not spiritual, what are you going to pass over to your children

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- “6. DATA COLLECTION METHODS.” Accessed October 7, 2017.
<http://www.fao.org/docrep/003/x2465e/x2465e09.htm>.
- “A Guide to Coding Qualitative Data.” *Salma Patel* (blog), September 18, 2014.
<http://salmapatel.co.uk/academia/coding-qualitative-research>.
- “About Us - Adventurer Club.” Accessed January 29, 2018. <https://www.adventurer-club.org/about-us>.
- “Adventist Education.” Accessed January 30, 2018.
http://adventisteducation.org/about/adventist_education/overview.
- Alban Institute., Richard P., and Olson. *A New Day for Family Ministry*. Bethesda, MD: Alban Institute, 1996.
- “Analyzing Focus Group Data.” Accessed October 7, 2017.
https://www.sagepub.com/sites/default/files/upm-binaries/11007_Chapter_7.pdf.
- Baylor, Josh. “What Is Post-Christian Culture, and Am I Living in One?” *International Mission Board* (blog), March 10, 2017. <https://www.imb.org/2017/03/10/post-christian-culture-living-one/>.
- Beatty, Robert. “Nobody Is Answering the Cry for Help from the African-American Man-Child.” *South Florida Times*, June 23, 2011.
<http://www.sfltimes.com/uncategorized/nobody-is-answering-the-cry-for-help-from-the-african-american-man-child>.
- “Bible Gateway Passage: Deuteronomy 6 - New Revised Standard Version.” Bible Gateway. Accessed October 31, 2017.
<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Deuteronomy+6&version=NRSV>.
- “Bible Gateway Passage: Matthew 5 - New International Version.” Bible Gateway. Accessed January 30, 2018.
<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew+5&version=NIV>.
- “Bible Gateway Passage: Proverbs 13:20 - New International Version.” Bible Gateway. Accessed January 29, 2018.
<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Proverbs+13%3A20&version=NIV>.
- Bohr, Yvonne, and Connie Tse. “Satellite Babies in Transnational Families: A Study of Parents’ Decision to Separate from Their Infants.” *Infant Mental Health Journal* 30, no. 3 (2009): 265-86.
- Caldwell, Elizabeth. *Making a Home for Faith: Nurturing the Spiritual Life of Your Children*. Cleveland, OH: Pilgrim Press, 2007.
- Charmaz, Kathy. *Constructing Grounded Theory*. 2nd ed. Introducing Qualitative Methods; Introducing Qualitative Methods. London: Sage, 2014.
- Clapp, Rodney. *Families at the Crossroads: Beyond Traditional & Modern Options*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993.
- Conde-Frazier, Elizabeth. *Listen to the Children : Conversations with Immigrant Families*. Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 2011.
- Creswell, John W. *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*. 4th ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 2014.

- Csinos, David M. *Children's Ministry in the Way of Jesus*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2013.
- Dawn, Marva J. *Is It a Lost Cause?: Having the Heart of God for the Church's Children*. Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Pub., 1997.
- Dean, Kenda Creasy. *Almost Christian: What the Faith of Our Teenagers Is Telling the American Church*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010.
<http://catdir.loc.gov/catdir/enhancements/fy1106/2009051989-t.html>.
- "Definition of SAMPLE." Accessed October 8, 2017. <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/sample>.
- Derosé, Kathryn Pitkin, José J. Escarce, and Nicole Lurie. "Immigrants and Health Care: Sources Of Vulnerability." *Health Affairs* 26, no. 5 (September 1, 2007): 1258-68.
<https://doi.org/10.1377/hlthaff.26.5.1258>.
- "Deuteronomy 6 ASV." Accessed January 30, 2018.
<http://biblehub.com/asv/deuteronomy/6.htm>.
- Ellen G White. *Patriarchs and Prophets*. Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Pub. Association, 1890.
- "Ellen G. White Writings in Multiple Languages." Accessed September 14, 2017.
https://egwwritings.org/?ref=en_AH.15.2¶=128.40.
- Ellen Gould Harmon White. *The Desire of the Ages*. 5th ed. Silver Spring, MD: Better Living Publications, 1990. <http://www.whiteestate.org/books/da/da2.html>.
- "Employment Status in Brooklyn Center, Minnesota (City) - Statistical Atlas." Accessed September 8, 2017. <https://statisticalatlas.com/place/Minnesota/Brooklyn-Center/Employment-Status>.
- "Faith Matters3.Pdf." Accessed January 29, 2018.
<https://www.ok.gov/odmhsas/documents/faith%20matters3.pdf>.
- "Find a Church: Minnesota Conference of Seventh-Day Adventists Maple Grove MN." Accessed September 12, 2017.
<http://www.mnsda.com/article/107/directories/find-a-church>.
- Flett, John G. *The Witness of God: The Trinity, Missio Dei, Karl Barth, and the Nature of Christian Community*. Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Pub., 2010.
- Gurukul Lutheran Theological College and Research Institute., Abraham P., and Athyal. *Mission Today: Challenges and Concerns*. Chennai: Gurukul Lutheran Theological College & Research Institute, 1998.
- Habermas, Jürgen., and Eduardo. Mendieta. *Religion and Rationality: Essays on Reason, God and Modernity*. Cambridge: Polity, 2002.
- Hesselgrave, David J. *Paradigms in Conflict: 10 Key Questions in Christian Missions Today*. Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2005.
- "Household Types in Brooklyn Center, Minnesota (City) - Statistical Atlas." Accessed September 7, 2017. <https://statisticalatlas.com/place/Minnesota/Brooklyn-Center/Household-Types#figure/families-with-children>.
- "Ilhan Omar Will Be Nation's First Somali-American Legislator." *Star Tribune*. Accessed September 10, 2017. <http://www.startribune.com/ilhan-omar-will-be-nation-s-first-somali-american-legislator/400478961/>.
- Kirk, J. Andrew. *What Is Mission?: Theological Explorations*. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2000.

- Labaree, Robert V. "Research Guides: Organizing Your Social Sciences Research Paper: Types of Research Designs." Research Guide. Accessed February 3, 2018. <http://libguides.usc.edu/writingguide/researchdesigns>.
- Langford, Daniel L. *The Pastor's Family: The Challenges of Family Life and Pastoral Responsibilities*. New York: Haworth Pastoral Press, 1998.
- Marcum, Walt. *Deepening Youth Spirituality: The Youth Worker's Guide*. Nashville: Abingdon, 2001.
- Massey, Douglas S., and Monica Espinoza Higgins. "The Effect of Immigration on Religious Belief and Practice: A Theologizing or Alienating Experience?" *Social Science Research* 40, no. 5 (September 2011): 1371-89. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssresearch.2010.04.012>.
- Mbiti, John S. *African Religions & Philosophy*. New York: Praeger, 1969.
- Morgenthaler, Shirley K. *Exploring Children's Spiritual Formation: Foundational Issues*. River Forest, IL: Pillars Press, 1999.
- Müller, Karl. *Mission Theology: An Introduction*. Nettetal: Steyler Verlag-Wort und Werk, 1987.
- Myers, Barbara Kimes, and William Myers. *Engaging in Transcendence: The Church's Ministry and Covenant with Young Children*. Cleveland, OH: Pilgrim Press, 1992.
- Nestingen, James Arne. *Living out Our Callings at Home*. St. Paul, MN: Centered Life, 2003.
- "Nsf02057_4.Pdf." Accessed October 7, 2017. https://www.nsf.gov/pubs/2002/nsf02057/nsf02057_4.pdf.
- NW, 1615 L. St, Suite 800 Washington, and DC 20036 USA 202-419-4300 | Main 202-419-4349 | Fax 202-419-4372 | Media Inquiries. "A Religious Portrait of African-Americans." *Pew Research Center's Religion & Public Life Project* (blog), January 30, 2009. <http://www.pewforum.org/2009/01/30/a-religious-portrait-of-african-americans/>.
- Obiakor, Festus E., and Michael O. Afoláyan. "African Immigrant Families in the United States: Surviving the Sociocultural Tide." *The Family Journal* 15, no. 3 (July 1, 2007): 265-70. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1066480707301425>.
- "Overview of Minnesota (State) - Statistical Atlas." Accessed September 7, 2017. <https://statisticalatlas.com/state/Minnesota/Overview>.
- Owusu, Thomas Y. "Transnationalism among African Immigrants in North America: The Case of Ghanaians in Canada." *Journal of International Migration and Integration / Revue de l'integration et de La Migration Internationale* 4, no. 3 (September 1, 2003): 395-413. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12134-003-1027-x>.
- Oxford University Press. *The Complete Parallel Bible: Containing the Old and New Testaments with the Apocryphal/Deuterocanonical Books: New Revised Standard Version, Revised English Bible, New American Bible, New Jerusalem Bible*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1993.
- "Pathfinders." Accessed January 29, 2018. <http://youth.adventist.org/Ministries/Pathfinders>.
- "Police Killed at Least 309 Black People in the U.S. in 2016." Mapping Police Violence. Accessed September 13, 2017. <https://mappingpoliceviolence.org/>.
- Power, John. *Mission Theology Today*. Logos Books; Logos Books. Dublin: Gill and MacMillan, 1970.

- “Psalm 19 NIV.” Accessed April 27, 2017. <http://biblehub.com/niv/psalms/19.htm>.
- “Religion and Globalization: African Christians in the United States, a Paper Written by Abolade Ezekiel Olagoke.” Accessed September 13, 2017. <http://hirr.hartsem.edu/sociology/olagoke.html>.
- Roberto, John. *Faithformation2020: Designing the Future of Faith Formation*. Naugatuck, CT: LifelongFaith Associates, 2010.
- “Sampling.” Accessed October 8, 2017. <https://www.socialresearchmethods.net/kb/sampling.php>.
- Stonehouse, Catherine. *Joining Children on the Spiritual Journey: Nurturing a Life of Faith*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1998.
- Stonehouse, Catherine., and Scottie. May. *Listening to Children on the Spiritual Journey: Guidance for Those Who Teach and Nurture*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2010.
- Strommen, Merton P., and Dick. Hardel. *Passing on the Faith: A Radical New Model for Youth and Family Ministry*. Winona, MN: St. Mary’s Press/Christian Brothers Publications, 2000.
- Taber, C. R. “Missiology and the Bible.” *Missiology: An International Review* 11, no. 2 (1983): 229-45.
- Tate, Emily. “Minnesota Just Elected The Country’s First Somali-American Muslim Woman Legislator.” *Huffington Post*, November 9, 2016, sec. Politics. http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/ilhan-omar-elected-to-minnesota-legislature_us_58228c5be4b0aac624882078.
- “THE CHRISTIAN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION SYLLABI FOR SECONDARY SCHOOLS: AN ADVENTIST ASSESSMENT AND A PROPOSAL.” Accessed March 9, 2018. http://christinthe classroom.org/vol_23/23cc_103-118.htm.
- The Holy Bible New Revised Standard Version*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1989.
- Thompson, Marjorie J. *Family, the Forming Center*. Nashville: Upper Room Books, 1996.
- . *Family, the Forming Center*. Nashville: Upper Room Books, 1996.
- VandeCreek, Larry., Hilary E. Bender, and Merle R. Jordan. *Research in Pastoral Care and Counseling: Quantitative and Qualitative Approaches*. Decatur, GA: Journal of Pastoral Care Publications, 1994.
- Wakahiu, Jane. “Journey of Faith: African Girls and Religious Life.” Global Sisters Report, 3:13pm. <http://globalsistersreport.org/column/trends/journey-faith-african-girls-and-religious-life-31346>.
- White, Ellen Gould Harmon. *Education*. Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Pub. Association, 1942.
- . *The Acts of the Apostles [in the Proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ]*. 1 online resource vols. Mt. View, CA: Wiretap.
- . *The Adventist Home*. china: Stanborough press Ltd United Kingdom, 1952.
- Wright, Christopher J. H. *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible’s Grand Narrative*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2006.
- “Youngro Lee, To Dream Or Not To Dream, 16 Cornell Journal of Law and Public Policy 231, 232 - Google Search.” Accessed September 3, 2017. <https://www.google.com/search?q=Youngro+Lee%2C+To+Dream+Or+Not+To+Dream%2C+16+Cornell+Journal+of+Law+and+Public+Policy+231%2C+232&rl>

z=1C1CHBD_enUS756US756&oq=Youngro+Lee%2C+To+Dream+Or+Not+To
+Dream%2C+16+Cornell+Journal+of+Law+and+Public+Policy+231%2C+232&
aqs=chrome..69i57.2784j0j7&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8.

Yust, Karen-Marie. *Real Kids, Real Faith: Practices for Nurturing Children's Spiritual Lives*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2004.

Holy Bible : New International Version. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2009.

Zuck, Roy B., and Robert E. Clark. *Childhood Education in the Church*. Chicago: Moody Press, 1975.

———. *Childhood Education in the Church*. Chicago: Moody Press, 1975.